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ABSTRACT

The Australian Language Levels (ALL) Project offers a coherent model for elementary and secondary language curriculum design. Book 3 of the four-volume series focuses on teaching methods, appropriate instructional resources, and student evaluation and provides advice for teachers in each of these areas. The section on methods discusses the learner-centered approach, the teaching implications of the eight principles of language learning outlined in Book 1, accommodating learner differences through individualized and group activities, and seven possible approaches to lesson organization. The section on resources begins by outlining criteria for selecting, adapting, and creating resources and then discusses resources that provide communicative data in the target language, resources and activities promoting communicative use of the target language, resources for whole-class, group, and individual learning, textbooks as resources, and sequencing or leveling of resources. The assessment section establishes a philosophical context for developing assessment procedures and then examines the purposes and content of assessment, methods, development of assessment activities and exercises, criteria for judging performance in activities, and links with Australian standardized tests at the secondary level. Contains more than 150 references. (MSE)

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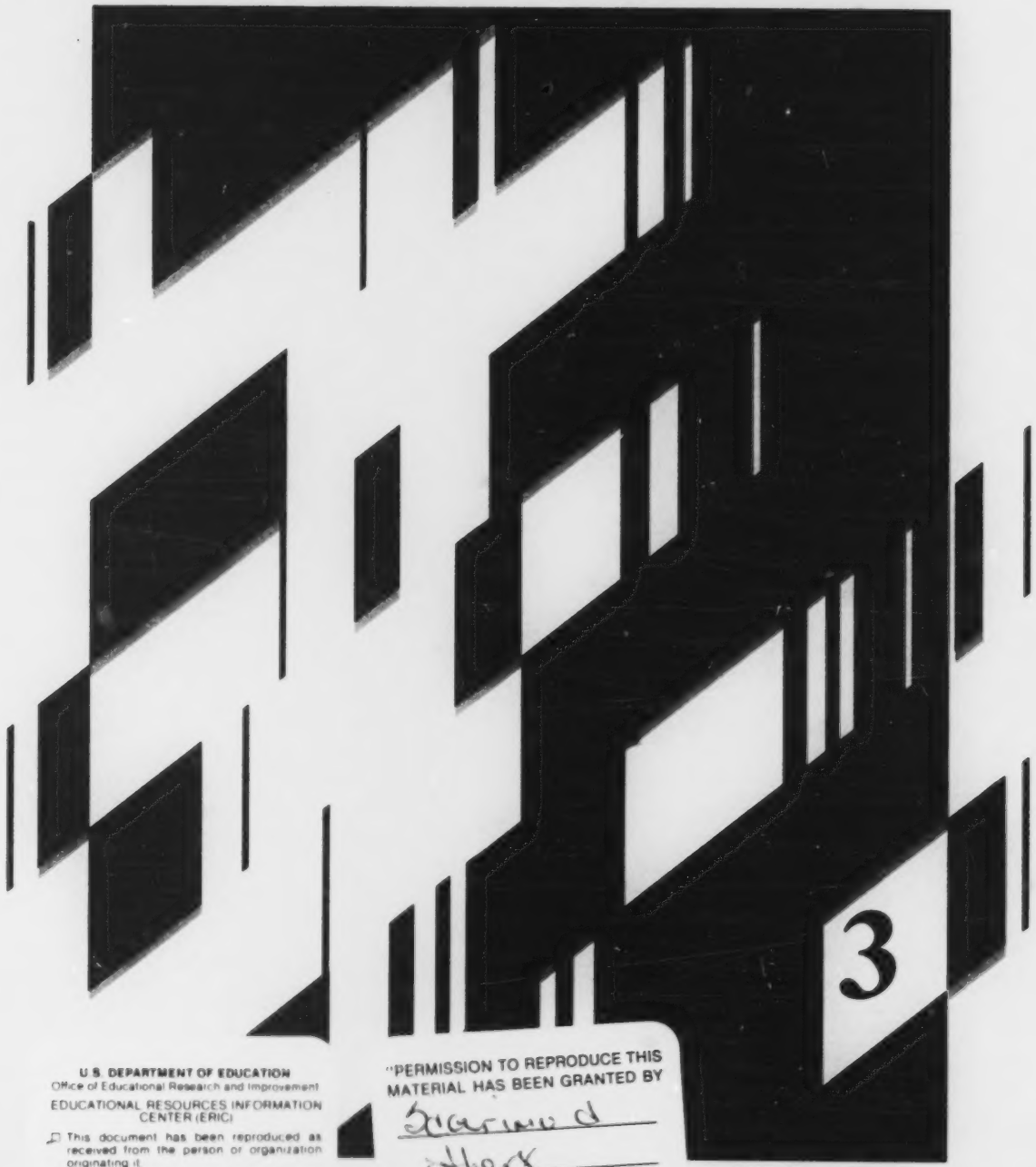
Method, Resources, and Assessment



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Australian Language Levels Guidelines

Book 3

Method, Resources, and Assessment

Angela Scarino
David Vale
Penny McKay
and Dr John Clark

Curriculum Development Centre

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References to the teaching and learning of languages in these guidelines refer to the teaching and learning of languages other than English and English as a second language. The *ALL Guidelines* do not directly address the teaching of 'English' as a subject.

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A glossary of terms used in the *ALL Guidelines* is provided in Book 4.

The Essence of ALL

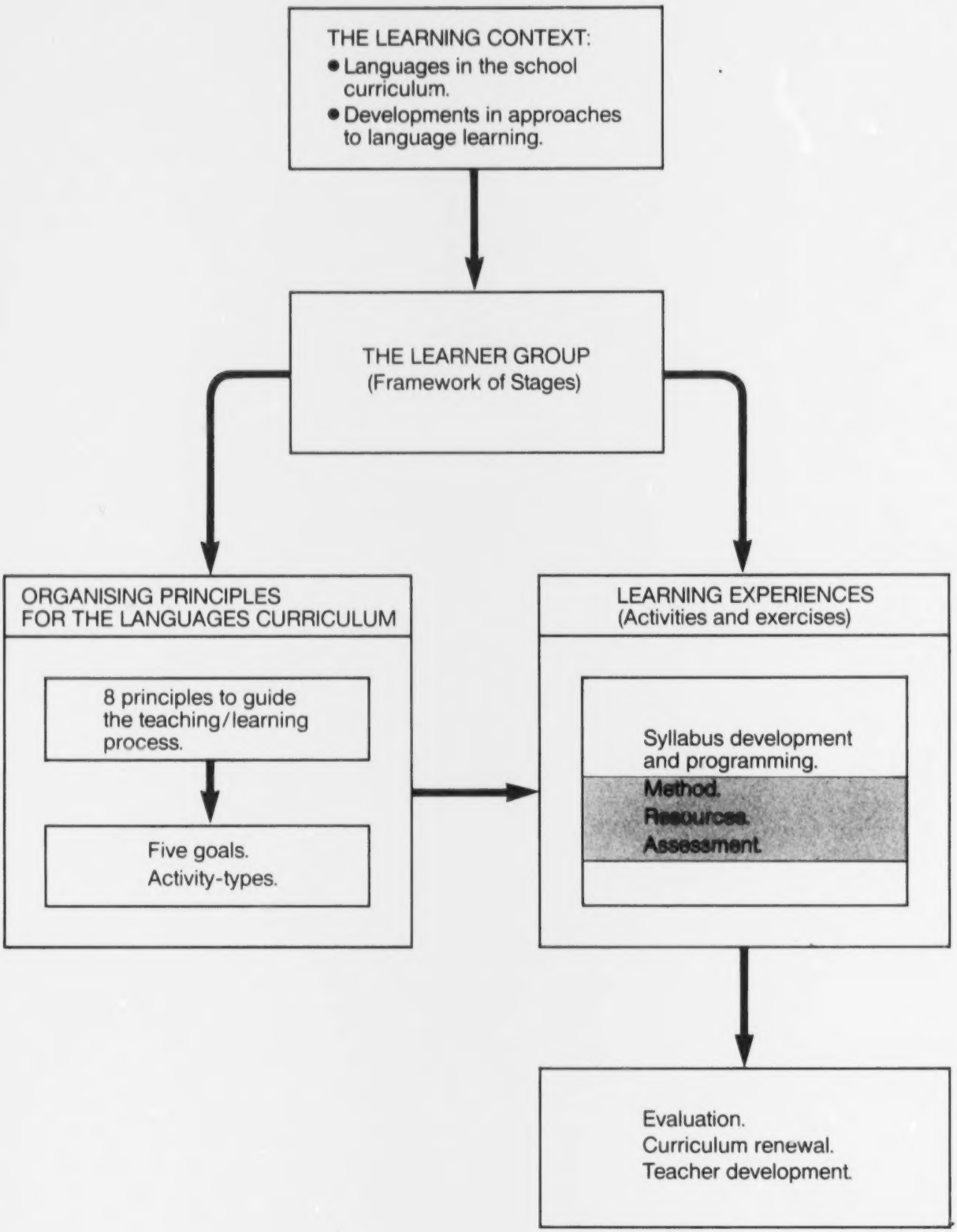
The curriculum model presented in the *ALL Guidelines* has been developed for school language learning, and is based on good classroom practice and developments in approaches to language teaching and learning. It advocates a learner-centred approach. Learner characteristics are described, and language syllabuses and programs are organised by means of a proposed Framework of progressive, age-related Stages.

The ALL languages curriculum focuses on the nature of language learning, which is described through eight principles of language teaching/learning. Learners engage in a range of learning experiences (both activities and supporting exercises) which involve purposeful language use. Activities are designed to help learners work towards common goals of language learning, outlined in five broad areas. Activities are categorised into six activity-types, in order to ensure a spread of language use and cover a range of contexts and purposes.

The eight principles, the five goals, and the activity-types are the organising principles of the ALL languages curriculum. They influence the content of learning (planned in syllabuses and programs), as well as the process of learning (described in terms of teaching method, resources, and assessment).

The ALL curriculum is dynamic, and subject to constant refinement through 'curriculum renewal'. This is an evolutionary process of critical evaluation which enables teachers to fine-tune the curricular skills that they use to design and implement language programs. It is in this way that their programs become increasingly responsive to the needs and interests of learners.

The diagram on the page opposite highlights those components of the ALL languages curriculum which are the focus of this book.


THE LEARNING CONTEXT:
• Languages in the school curriculum.
• Developments in approaches to language learning.
THE LEARNER GROUP
(Framework of Stages)
ORGANISING PRINCIPLES FOR THE LANGUAGES CURRICULUM
8 principles to guide the teaching/learning process.
Five goals.
Activity-types.
LEARNING EXPERIENCES
(Activities and exercises)
Syllabus development and programming.
Method.
Resources.
Assessment.
Evaluation.
Curriculum renewal.
Teacher development.

Section A

Method

A Learner-Centred Approach

The role of the learner

The ALL Project sees a learner-centred approach and a focus on the learning process as essential features of the language classroom.

In a learner-centred curriculum, learners are seen as playing an active role in the learning process. Learners can be encouraged through negotiation and through the development of learning-how-to-learn skills to take some of the responsibility for their own learning. Negotiation allows learners to make known to the teacher their views about what they are learning and how they are learning. Negotiation also allows learners to be more aware of the direction their learning is taking, and therefore take more interest and become more involved in what they are doing.

Learners' ability to take responsibility for their own learning depends on their skills of independent learning. They need to learn how to:

- manage the physical environment
- search for and discover information for themselves
- take appropriate risks and learn from mistakes
- determine their own targets and assignments and, through discussion with the teacher, how best to achieve these
- work individually
- work in a group, cooperating with others, helping them, and being helped by them
- record information for themselves
- evaluate their own efforts as well as the process they went through to attain a goal
- use strategies to overcome communication breakdown
- use negotiating strategies
- develop specific skills in speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

The role of the teacher

A shift in emphasis towards an increasingly learner-centred view of the learning process involves a change in the traditional role of the teacher. Although the teacher continues to play a valuable role as instructor in the classroom, the role shifts when appropriate, from that of instructor towards that of facilitator. The teacher is sensitive to the needs of the learners and seeks to organise and plan a learning environment which caters for individual differences and encourages all learners to become actively involved. There are opportunities for negotiation of the learning program and, at the same time, deliberate training to assist learners to take responsibility for their own learning.

As a facilitator, the teacher becomes a resource person as well as being a guide in the learning process, anticipating learning needs and providing assistance and resources as required. The teacher also becomes a consultant, providing constructive criticism, indicating where help is available, and assisting in developing independent learning skills. The teacher talks with learners about the program and the assessment process, and with both learners and parents when describing progress and providing pointers for growth.

The teacher/learner partnership

In a classroom where learners play an active and responsible part in their learning, teachers and learners work together in a partnership. The most important and overriding strategy which will assist this partnership is negotiation.

Negotiation of learning between teacher and learners is more likely to result in learning experiences which cater for the particular needs, interests, and abilities of the learners, and to result in clear, attainable goals. Teachers and learners can work

together with a sense of direction and confidence which results from an understanding of the learning activities.

Negotiation in language classrooms depends on various factors, including the personality of the teacher, the cultural background of the learners and the teacher, the maturity of the learners, and their experience in making decisions. There can be differing degrees of negotiation in a language classroom, ranging from incidental negotiation, in the context of a learning environment which is largely teacher-directed, to negotiation which filters through into all aspects of the learning situation.

Learners should be encouraged to talk with the teacher about aspects of their learning such as:

- the particular Stage at which they should be working and the level of performance for which to aim
- the objectives to be reached in the various units of work
- the learning experiences in which to engage, and appropriate resources
- the level of commitment they should make to various aspects of their work in the light of what they wish to achieve
- the criteria that will determine successful performance.

Strategies which teachers can employ to facilitate negotiation and provide opportunities for learners to manage their own learning include:

- providing choice (e.g. learners choose a topic from a list of three or four)
- drawing up contracts which indicate clearly the involvement of both learner and teacher, and leave space for modification
- talking openly with learners about the activity or unit of work to be covered (e.g. why it is important, what will assist learning, what constraints prevail)
- providing and seeking feedback regarding how an activity or unit of work should progress or develop
- using questionnaires to obtain feedback from learners
- eliciting written responses at the end of an activity
- evaluating with learners the usefulness of particular activities, exercises, and resources.

Such strategies are closely linked to the strategies that teachers adopt when carrying out formative assessment, where they are continuously observing and checking learners' responses and their ability to work with particular activities and resources.

Teachers who are not used to negotiating with learners will need to develop their own skills of negotiation as well as those of their learners. This can be achieved over time, in the early stages by simply listening to learners' reactions and acknowledging their perceived needs, and later by discussing the learning program in a way that will have an effect on the whole teaching/learning process.

Teaching Implications of the Eight Principles of Language Learning

The major goal of language learning is that learners will be able to use the target language. This goal can be reached following a variety of paths, and using a variety of teaching approaches. No one particular method is advocated here. Rather, an approach is suggested where teachers embrace the eight principles of language learning as a guide to all aspects of their teaching.

The eight principles of language learning are discussed in detail in Book 1. They state that learners learn a language best when:

1. they are treated as individuals with their own needs and interests
2. they are provided with opportunities to participate in communicative use of the target language in a wide range of activities
3. they are exposed to communicative data which is comprehensible and relevant to their own needs and interests
4. they focus deliberately on various language forms, skills, and strategies, in order to support the process of language acquisition
5. they are exposed to sociocultural data and direct experience of the culture(s) embedded within the target language
6. they become aware of the role and nature of language and of culture
7. they are provided with appropriate feedback about their progress
8. they are provided with opportunities to manage their own learning.

Methodological implications of each of the principles are set out below:

Principle 1:

Learners learn a language best when they are treated as individuals with their own needs and interests

- Teachers consider the whole learner (i.e. intellectual, social, and affective development) when determining the content and processes of learning.
- Teachers engage learners' intellect (e.g. through problem solving, information gap, opinion gap, and jigsaw activities).
- Teachers appeal to learners' imagination and harness their creativity (e.g. through simulations, games, stories, drama, self-created fantasies, visuals).
- Teachers employ strategies and select activities, exercises, and resources which cater for individual differences in learners' ability, learning style, and language background.
- Teachers provide different kinds of support and feedback to accommodate the differing needs of individual learners.
- Teachers create an atmosphere of trust and risk-taking where making errors is seen as a natural part of learning.
- Teachers create opportunities for learners to express their own opinions and ideas.

Refer to Book 1 for further discussion of this Principle and to the section which follows on *Catering for Learner Differences*, for suggestions on strategies to help teachers treat learners as individuals with their own needs and interests.

Principle 2:

Learners learn a language best when they are provided with opportunities to participate in communicative use of the target language in a wide range of activities

- Teachers encourage and promote the active involvement of all learners in communication activities.
- Teachers value and promote genuine communication in the target language with learners, between learners, and between learners and speakers of the target language (e.g. face to face and through correspondence with penfriends or between classes).
- Teachers provide a variety of activities based on a range of suitably graded spoken and written communicative data, e.g.
  - — activities engaged in for pleasure (e.g. viewing and listening for pleasure, reading for pleasure, listening to or singing songs)
  - — activities involving problem solving, and information or opinion gaps (e.g. identifying, spotting differences, discovering what's missing, arranging things, conducting a class survey, obtaining information and exchanging it with others who have additional information so that an activity can be completed)
  - — games (language practice games, communication games, puzzles, and quizzes)
  - — simulation and drama activities (dramatic episodes, creating an ongoing classroom story, making up radio and television programs)
  - — projects (e.g. magazines, exhibitions, cultural performances)
  - — visits and exchanges to countries where the target language is used, or visits to speakers of the target language in the local community.

Refer to Book 1 for a detailed discussion of this Principle. Refer to Book 2, *Appendix 2,* and the section on *Resources* in this book for suggested activities. A range of communicative activities can also be found in Clark and Hamilton, 1984.

Principle 3:

Learners learn a language best when they are exposed to communicative data which is comprehensible and relevant to their own needs and interests

- Teachers create an atmosphere which encourages using and working with the target language and culture.
- Teachers ensure that communicative data is comprehensible and relevant and that there is an adequate level of contextual support to assist learners.
- Teachers ensure that a range of language surrounds learners in the classroom and provide different kinds of language stimuli from a variety of sources (e.g. teacher talk, other classroom talk, audio and video recordings, written information, realia and written texts from outside the classroom, visitors from and visits to the target language community).
- Teachers ensure that communicative data and the activities related to it challenge learners, so they are gently pressured into expanding and improving their existing communicative resources.
- Teachers encourage learners to employ the same prediction strategies that they use to extract meaning from what they hear and read in their dominant language.

Refer to Book 1 for a more detailed discussion of this Principle. Refer to the section on *Resources* in this book for information on resources which provide communicative data and further guidelines on the use of the target language in the classroom.

Principle 4:

Learners learn a language best when they focus deliberately on various language forms, skills, and strategies in order to support the process of language acquisition

- Teachers focus on forms (e.g. items of vocabulary, grammar) skills, strategies, and items of general knowledge as an integral part of the language learning experience, so that learners are supported at the appropriate time in the development of their language resource and the ability to mobilise it in language use.

- Teachers focus on forms, skills, strategies, and items of general knowledge through a range of exercises which may be carried out prior to undertaking an activity, during the activity, or after it. As Littlewood (1981) suggests, 'pre-communicative activities' are valuable 'to give the learners fluent control over linguistic forms, so that lower-level processes will be capable of unfolding automatically in response to higher-level decisions based on meanings'. Equally, learners may be pitched into activities with little or no preparation (the 'deep-end' strategy, as Brumfit (1979) calls it). Here, the teacher needs to structure activities in such a way as to harness learners' existing knowledge and experience, and, at the same time, incorporate a challenge which learners can cope with. It is also essential to ensure that there is adequate opportunity during or after the activity for a deliberate focus on areas of weakness which might have been exposed.
- Teachers provide a range of exercises which are personalised and contextualised as far as possible. The exercises may be carried out by individuals or through group work, both orally and in writing. Many may occur through games and will allow for the development of cognitive processing skills and strategies, as well as the development of learners' language resource.
- Teachers teach pronunciation as an integral part of oral language use, working on stress, intonation, rhythm and pausing, and using language in context.
- Teachers ensure that there are opportunities for learners to reflect on how meaning is affected by form. In later Stages, learners are encouraged to work together to deduce how particular structural patterns and stylistic conventions work in the texts to which they are exposed.

Refer to Book 1 for a more detailed discussion of this Principle.

Principle 5:

Learners learn a language best when they are exposed to sociocultural data and direct experience of the culture(s) embedded within the target language

- Teachers encourage and facilitate experience of community events and direct contact with people in the target language community. They foster penpal correspondence, audio and/or videotape exchanges between schools, school exchange visits, and holiday travel, and make available authentic documents such as menus, magazines, brochures, songs, books, and pictures. (Openness towards another culture is fostered by experiencing it and reflecting upon it, rather than by learning about it second-hand).
- Opportunities are provided for learners to talk with people who have lived in the target language community, and to see films, videos, and slides which illustrate the contemporary culture of the target language community.
- Areas of sociocultural interest to school learners will depend on the Stage at which they are working, but might include:
  - — home life in the target language environment
  - — school practices in the target language environment ('community schools', schools in the target country)
  - — hobbies and leisure activities
  - — the pop world
  - — the media
  - — some of the cultural traditions of the target language community
  - — some knowledge of the economy and the world of work in the target language community
  - — some knowledge of the historical roots of the target language community and its relationship to other communities
  - — some knowledge of the political and social institutions of the target language community
  - — current affairs in the target language community.

Refer to Book 1 for a more detailed discussion of this Principle, and Book 2, *Appendix 2* for suggested activities.

Principle 6:

Learners learn a language best when they become aware of the role and nature of language and of culture

- Teachers emphasise and make explicit to learners general features of language and culture, and their role in society.
- Teachers emphasise not only learning language, but also learning through language and learning about language.
- Language awareness is promoted by:
  - — introducing rhyming games, spelling games, vocabulary games, and other forms of playing with words and meanings
  - — asking learners to reflect upon their own experience of language, language learning, and language use
  - — fostering a school policy around the theme of 'language and learning' or 'language across the curriculum' to enable teachers to become aware of the principles underlying language and learning, so that they may reflect on the way in which they themselves use language in their teaching, and the way that they invite their learners to use language in their learning.
- Teachers provide experience of various cultures followed by guided reflection to build up cultural awareness and sensitivity.
- Cultural awareness is promoted by talking about the different cultures with which learners have come into contact, and considering similarities and differences and possible reasons for these.

Refer to Book 1 for a more detailed discussion of this Principle, and Book 2, *Appendix 2* for suggested activities.

Principle 7:

Learners learn a language best when they are provided with appropriate feedback about their progress

- Teachers discuss goals and objectives with learners, and the best means of achieving them.
- Teachers provide learners with feedback on the learning process, and with suggestions on ways to improve their learning.
- Learners know the criteria on which their performance is being judged (whether on the basis of its communicative success, its appropriateness to context, its formal accuracy, or on a combination of all of these).
- Teachers provide feedback appropriate to the type of activity in which learners are engaged.
- Teachers respond to error in different ways, taking into account the nature of the activity, the relative seriousness of the error made, the likely effect of correction on the particular learner who made the error, and the realistic expectations of long-term improvement as a result of any correction made.
- Learners are encouraged and shown how to monitor their own and each other's performance.

Refer to Book 1 for a more detailed discussion of this Principle, and to the section on *Assessment* in this book for further information on this topic.

Principle 8:

Learners learn a language best when they are provided with opportunities to manage their own learning.

- Teachers are explicit about goals and objectives and the most appropriate means of achieving them.
- Teachers focus on the development of learning-how-to-learn skills (see Book 2, *Appendix 1*).
- Teachers foster the development of social interaction and cooperative learning skills.
- Teachers encourage learners to take increasing responsibility for their own learning, by providing them with opportunities to:
  - — work individually on assignments
  - — work in groups and determine together how best to contribute to the common activity in hand

— negotiate and plan their work over a certain period of time, learn how to set themselves realistic objectives, and determine how best to achieve them
— search out information for themselves from dictionaries, grammar books, and commercial or teacher-prepared materials
— monitor and evaluate their own learning
— record knowledge for themselves in appropriate ways
— elicit rules from language in use, and discuss their hypotheses with others
— build up a folder of completed written work, and a personal bank of spoken work on tape as a record of their progress.

Refer to Book 1 for a more detailed discussion of this Principle, and to the first section of this book, *A Learner-Centred Approach*, for additional information on this topic.

Conclusion

Teachers should aim to provide a wide range of classroom learning experiences, some designed to promote spontaneous learning, some designed to focus on underlying knowledge, skills, and strategies, some designed to promote awareness of pattern and function, and some designed to assist learners to develop control in the use of the target language. The balance that should exist between these various learning experiences at various times for particular learners remains a matter for teachers to decide. While certain general statements may be made in advance about the overall methodological balance that seems appropriate for different age-groups, it is important also to stress that the method adopted by the teacher at any particular moment should respond to the particular needs and aspirations of the learners. Where learners are developing bad habits (e.g. inhibition from too much deliberate learning, stabilisation from insufficient communicative challenge, insufficient focus on form, etc.), a certain methodological treatment may be required. Method, like syllabus content, cannot and should not be so determined in advance, that it is unable to respond to the requirements of individual learners or groups of learners, and yet it should have some structure, and be based broadly on what is believed to work best in school language learning, given the sort of goals that have been set for this.

Catering for Learner Differences

Language teachers in Australia in both primary and secondary schools are faced with classes consisting of learners with widely differing needs and abilities, especially when learners with a home background in the language are placed in the same class as second language learners. It is the responsibility of individual schools to make policy decisions on grouping and timetabling according to the exigencies of each situation. However, since it is inevitable that there will be individual differences in needs, ability, and previous language experience within any group of language learners, all teachers need to develop strategies to cater for learner differences.

Although there will always be many such differences in any group of learners, it is possible (and indeed it is recommended) that teachers group learners in different ways for different purposes (e.g. according to their background in the language, social maturity, learning style, etc.). Teachers are then able to arrange their teaching to cater for the individual differences that exist in the classroom. Sometimes they will deal with learners on an individual basis, and at other times they will bring learners together into appropriate, manageable, and effective learning groups.

Traditionally, approaches to dealing with learner differences in language learning have responded to perceived differences in learners' ability and/or achievement. The three predominant strategies employed are:

- streaming by general ability, based on IQ and/or general subject grades
- setting by achievement level in a particular subject
- mixed ability grouping.

Whether a class is streamed, set, or of mixed ability, it will still consist of learners with different individual needs, abilities, and previous experience of the target language. Even in a relatively homogeneous class it will be necessary for language teachers to employ strategies and to build up resources to cater for individual differences if effective learning is to take place.

Teachers need to come to terms with differences in learners' aspirations, differences in their social, affective, and cognitive maturity, and differences in their language background, achievement, learning style, and ability to take responsibility. (See Book 1, *Principle 1*, for a detailed discussion of individual differences.)

The following strategies will assist teachers to cater for the various individual differences they will inevitably find amongst their learners. The strategies that are employed will depend on the needs of their particular group(s) of learners, their individual teaching style, the objectives of the unit of work, and the resources available. Strategies need to be employed within the context of a well organised teaching program. They are set out as follows:

- Individualised learning in whole class activities
  - The process approach to writing
  - Worksheets
  - Peer tutoring
  - Team teaching
  - Learning contracts
  - Using other people
- Group activities
- Individualised activities — learning centres and self-access materials.

Individualised learning in whole class activities

Finocchiaro (1978) writes, 'Good teachers have always individualised by varying questions according to the ability level of individuals, by simplifying and adapting materials, and by assigning tasks which have relevance to the learners' lives and interests.'

Strategies for simplifying and adapting materials, and for grading activities can be found in this book in the section on *Resources.*

Strategies which enable teachers to cater for individual needs when the class is working as a whole unit are described as follows:

The process approach to writing

The process approach to writing embodies a respect for learners' work and a recognition that writing is a developmental process, and not just a one-off exercise for the teacher to mark and give back.

The teacher and individual learner read together, analyse, and discuss a piece of writing done by the learner. (Individual learners may also analyse and discuss their work with a sympathetic classmate, instead of the teacher.) This approach to writing involves learners in drafting and redrafting their writing and discussing their work with the teacher or a classmate as they proceed, until they are completely satisfied with it. This discussion process is often referred to as 'conferencing'.

During the conferencing with the learner the teacher provides feedback on the writing, and also focuses on weaknesses in grammar or vocabulary, or any other area needing attention.

At the end of the drafting process, the writing is generally presented to an audience. Other learners might read the writing in the form of a class-book or on posters on the wall, for example, or the audience might be a friend, or the family at home.

In the process approach to writing, it is an effective procedure to ask learners to read their work to classmates, and to train them to look for particular strengths and weaknesses in each other's writing. In this way, they learn to 'conference' each other. This approach to writing can be employed at any Stage of language learning, even if with younger or beginning learners it involves them only in the experience of sharing their work with an audience, or simply reacting to aspects of the writing that they have enjoyed.

This approach to writing is ideally suited to the language classroom. The central features of the approach are that learners work at their own pace, help each other, and receive individual help from the teacher, depending on their particular needs. They are also learning how to take responsibility for their own work, thereby developing valuable learning-how-to-learn skills. The principles of this approach can be applied to many kinds of written work in the language classroom.

Worksheets

Commercially prepared worksheets or worksheets prepared by the teacher can be used effectively to cater for individual needs in the classroom. They can be designed around different topics, grammatical areas, or skills according to the needs of the learners. They can be used as part of a self-access centre (see below), or can be part of focused learning when the class is working as a group.

Alternatively, worksheets can be organised around core activities with extension or revision options, or be graded on the basis of increasing difficulty. Different groups of learners can be required to complete different sections of a single worksheet, or attempt completely different worksheets.

Peer tutoring

The term 'peer tutoring' refers to the teaching/learning process where learners serve as tutors to other learners. A learner may tutor a classmate of the same age, or may help someone younger (cross-age tutoring). The use of learners as tutors recognises that the learners themselves can be a valuable resource in the classroom and exploits the notion that children can learn effectively from each other. Both the tutor and the learner being tutored can gain from the experience.

Activities and exercises for peer tutoring need to be selected carefully. They may include pairwork activities, drilling using flash cards or word lists, games, spelling, discussion, and so on. A peer tutor can be used very effectively for conferencing and editing written work and to help review previous lessons.

Tutors must be able to follow directions in an unsupervised setting. They should also be able to relate well to other learners, and should already have mastered the material to be covered. They need not, however, be the most able learners in the class.

The learner to be tutored must, of course, be willing to be helped, and should also be able to work with minimal supervision. The teacher will need to monitor peer tutoring carefully to ensure that the learners involved are able to work well together.

It is important to prepare tutors for their task and explain to them their role and the procedures that they are to follow. They need to understand the importance of responding constructively and sensitively to the efforts of the learner being tutored rather than doing the work for him or her. Tutors are not responsible for discipline; any problems should be referred to the teacher.

Tutors will need to organise any equipment needed before the tutorial session and be responsible for returning it afterwards. They must also relay to the teacher information about progress made during the tutoring session. Whether tutors' reports are written or oral, it is necessary for the teacher to provide some basic guidelines regarding the type of information required.

Team teaching

In team teaching, teachers work in pairs or small groups, sharing responsibility for two or more groups of learners. There are a number of advantages to team teaching. Plans and ideas can be compared, and resources and specially prepared materials such as self-access materials can be shared. The different personality, area(s) of specialisation, and interests of each teacher can be tapped at different times to the advantage of different groups of learners. Team teaching facilitates individualisation. It means that there can be more flexibility in grouping a class; learning groups can be made more homogeneous, and small group work can be rendered more feasible (e.g. one teacher can assist a small group needing special attention, while the other teacher works with the rest of the class).

An important advantage of this technique is that teachers can support and motivate each other. Team teaching can also be a developmental process whereby teachers develop better classroom techniques through planning together and reflecting together about what is happening in the classroom.

It is essential that teachers who are sharing teaching in this way be able to meet regularly in their time away from the classroom.

Learning contracts

Contracts are agreements between a learner and the teacher (or in some cases, between a small group of learners and the teacher) for specified educational activities, or the mastery of an objective agreed upon in advance. They contain a clear understanding of and agreement about the assessment procedures to be used.

Contracts allow learners to work at rates most comfortable to them. They help learners to manage their own time, and to make choices about the activities which they will undertake. At the same time, contracts help teachers to provide work appropriate to the needs of individual learners.

Contracts can be used to assist in planning activities and keeping records of activities which have been carried out. It is best to keep contracts simple and easy to fill out, especially for young learners. Contracts are of most value when used with other ways of individualising learning, and they work especially well when used in conjunction with learning centres containing self-access materials.

When setting up a contract, it is helpful if teachers allow learners to make their own suggestions, and perhaps also allow them some choice about exactly what work they will complete in the given time. Negotiation of this kind is valuable in that it increases motivation, and helps to develop independence and responsibility in learning. An example of a learning contract is provided in Table 1.

Use of other people

Any visitor to the classroom from the target language community can provide learners with additional contact with the target language, and can help them to understand that the language is real, and that it is a medium of communication for many people, not just an artifical entity to be studied in the classroom.

Parents, visitors (adults or peers), members of the local community, and other teachers and learners in the school (including the principal) might be available to assist in the language classroom from time to time. Visitors to the classroom could be asked to speak to the whole class, a group, or individuals. Regular visitors could be asked to supervise small groups, assist learners working individually on self-access materials, join in games, and generally to become part of the classroom learning experience. Learners benefit from this additional attention. It is always wise to brief visitors before their visit, and give them an indication of specific tasks they might undertake with the learners.

Table 1: Learning contract

Name ..... **Class** .....

I will complete the following work by: .....

Signed: ..... (student)

Signed ..... (teacher)

Tasks I plan to finish	My comment	Teacher's comment
e.g. • Read 6 pages of chosen reading book. • Study the unit of work in . . . (textbook) and complete exercises 3 and 4. • Listen to a tape and do the activity/exercise on the accompanying workcard. • Finish the second draft of my writing. • Carry out pairwork activity No. 6. • Negotiated activity • Negotiated activity		

Group activities

Group work can be an effective strategy to cater for the individual in the language learning classroom. The teacher needs to be aware of processes involved in the formation of groups, and learners need guidance and training as to how to work in groups. (Teachers may wish to consult references cited in the bibliography for further suggestions on organising and using group work).

The success of group work depends to a large extent on the way in which it is organised and on the nature of the activity.

Organisation

Groups work well when:

— group members are assigned specific tasks
— learners understand how group work is related to the overall program
— work assigned is at an appropriate level
— group members feel comfortable about working together
— directions to complete a task are clear and can be referred to if forgotten (written instructions are often desirable)
— materials are easily obtained without disturbing other groups
— working conditions are comfortable and conducive to group work (e.g. the arrangement of furniture is important)
— groups are separated as much as possible
— the teacher is available to work with one or more groups
— group size is appropriate to the task and the experience of the learners in the group (a smaller number is preferable when learners are inexperienced in group work because of the range of learning-how-to-learn skills and social skills required)
— everyone has time to communicate their ideas.

Nature of the Activity

Groups work well when:

— there is a challenge in the activity for all learners
— the interaction required is suitable for group work
— the activity is open-ended
— the roles of the individuals are clearly specified
— the activities provide a purposeful context for problem solving, exchanging information, and other mental processes involved
— learners are able to evaluate the activity
— activities are varied
— standards are high but attainable.

Types of groups

There are various possibilities in terms of the organisation of groups. The type of grouping employed and the composition of the group will depend on the purpose and the nature of the activity.

For some activities mixed ability groups will be appropriate, while for others, grouping of learners of similar ability or with a similar problem area or particular strength will be more appropriate. For some activities and exercises, teachers will need to provide different tasks for different learners in the same group in order to accommodate differences in ability.

Pairs

Pairwork can take place during the directed part of the lesson where the teacher asks pairs of learners to work together for a particular purpose, e.g. to check each other's work.

Pairwork can also be the basic strategy for a particular activity, such as a 'describe and draw' activity, where two learners are required to complete a task. Information gap and opinion gap activities also lend themselves readily to pairwork. Pairwork activities are easy to organise, even in a more traditional classroom setting. (See section on *Resources* in this book for more detailed information on pairwork.)

Achievement groups

This type of grouping may be set up when the teacher feels it is necessary for learners to operate in groups which are homogeneous in terms of language ability.

Skills groups
Skills groups may be formed to work together for a special purpose such as in activities and exercises which focus on forms, skills, or strategies. For example, a group may be brought together to develop telephone skills. In this instance, the group could be heterogeneous in terms of language ability.

Interest groups
Groups of this type are formed on the basis of mutual interest in a particular area. Interest groups are often formed once learners are accustomed to working in groups, because by this stage they have developed motivation and the experience necessary to be able to choose for themselves a particular area of interest. In classrooms where learners have access to a resource bank of materials, such groups may select a topic or activity of mutual interest.

Research groups
These groups are organised by the teacher and are composed of learners who are to research a particular topic or area of study. The teacher will need to pay particular attention to the composition of research groups to ensure that an appropriate balance of the skills required for the activity is available within the group.

Friendship groups
These groups are made up of learners who have chosen to work together because of friendship. They help each other whether they are working on a common activity or not.

Project groups
Project groups consist of a number of learners each of whom is making his or her own individual contribution to a project on which the whole group is working (e.g. preparing a magazine, a concert, or a cultural display in the target language).

Individualised activities

Learning centres or self-access centres

Learning centres provide banks of learning resources which learners can use on their own. Such resources are generally referred to as 'self-access resources', and are available for learners to select from for their own individual activity, usually during a time set aside in the lesson, or after they have finished a particular piece of work set by the teacher. A total program can be organised around learning centres.

With one or more learning centres in their classroom teachers are able to adopt the role of facilitator in the teaching/learning process, and learners are able to take a greater amount of responsibility for their learning than in most other classroom learning arrangements. Access to a learning centre enables learners to use materials and focus on activities which most closely match their preferred learning style (e.g. ear-based learners could work mostly with audio materials). The establishment of learning centres can occur most successfully when a room is set aside as a language classroom, or where the teacher is always available to supervise the resources in the centre. A learning centre might be a sophisticated arrangement, or it might consist of no more than a box or trolley of self-access materials which the teacher takes to the classroom for the language lesson, if a permanent room is not available. (Examples of self-access materials which can be placed in a learning centre are listed in the section on *Resources* in this book).

A useful list of suggestions for the management of resources in learning centres can be found in Geddes and Sturtridge, 1982.

Learners will need to be introduced gradually to self-access materials. Activities such as pairwork, peer tutoring, and various kinds of group work will accustom learners to working without the direct supervision of the teacher and prepare them for work with self-access materials.

When learners use such materials, it is essential that they are aware of the relevant learning objectives, that they are provided with clear instructions about the activity to be carried out, that the materials are interesting and varied in order to maintain motivation, and that procedures are included which enable the learners and the teacher to monitor and evaluate performance and progress. (Frankel, in Geddes & Sturtridge 1982).

Conclusion

Catering for the individual differences of learners can be handled to a certain degree by teachers observing and noting differences, and grouping learners according to the differences. Teachers can provide for the particular needs of different groups of learners within a whole class situation by providing activities and exercises which are appropriate for the learners in the group. Teachers can also cater for differences by employing other strategies, such as those described above. Strategies for catering for the individual learner need to be viewed in the context of an eclectic approach to language teaching and learning based on the eight principles of language learning.

Approaches to Lesson Organisation

The following are short summaries of different approaches to lesson organisation which can be used by teachers at different times, depending on the lesson objectives, the nature of the learner group, and differences in learning and teaching styles.

- A basic PPP (Presentation/Practice/Production) approach. The lesson begins with some kind of a warm-up activity or discussion. This is followed by a presentation of the (new) topic. Learners then work on a particular skill or item of learning (e.g. guided activities, oral practice related to the topic, etc.). A follow-up activity is then organised (e.g. group discussion, role-play, project work.).
  [Warm up ... presentation ... activities and exercises ... follow-up activities]

- The lesson begins with a short session which involves the teacher speaking the target language for real interpersonal purposes. This may be followed by a whole-class warm-up or presentation session related to the main activity which is to follow (e.g. using flashcards, mime, gesture, overhead transparency sheets, cue cards, etc.). The class will then move into various kinds of activities and exercises related to the objectives of the lesson (e.g. pairwork, group work, whole class work, etc.) The final stage of the lesson is a 'winding down' session, where learners consolidate what they have learned in a short writing session.
  This last session usually takes up only one quarter of the whole lesson, the rest of the time being spent in as much oral interaction as possible.
  [Warm up ... presentation ... activities and exercises ... winding down, usually writing]

- A developmental or teacher-directed presentation session starts the lesson and is followed by learners working independently on reading and written work. This is followed by activities involving communicative use of the target language (e.g. pairwork, group work).
  [Presentation ... independent work ... activities]

- Adapted suggestopedic approach 1 (presentation of new material). The lesson begins with a few simple physical exercises, designed to release the build up of physical tension. A mind calming or mental relaxation session follows, then the 'active' or 'first concert' phase, where new material is introduced by the teacher. This must be done in as lively and dramatic a manner as possible, using a minimum of English, so that as much of the meaning of the material as possible is suggested by the use of voice modulation, facial expression, and body language. The 'passive' or 'second concert' phase follows. Here, the learners close their eyes again and refocus their minds, as a piece of quieter and slower music (a Baroque largo movement) is faded in. The teacher 'piggy-backs' the new material on to the music. Once learned, the new material is subsequently practised by the learners in later lessons in role-play situations and in writing.
  [Physical exercises ... mind calming ... first concert ... second concert ... exercises and activities]

- Adapted suggestopedic approach 2 (revision of material). Physical relaxation is followed by mind calming (see above). Previous material is reviewed, using the target language. The teacher directs the language use with the help of prepared overhead projector sheets, and the whole class is involved in asking and answering questions. This session is followed by activities and exercises. If learners are

writing individually or in pairs, judiciously selected music is played quietly in the background. Each lesson involves a certain amount of writing, though the greatest amount of time is devoted to oral work (particularly in the early Stages). Homework consolidates what has been done in the class, and is usually mostly writing (Vale 1985).

[Physical relaxation . . . mind calming . . . review of previous material . . . activities and exercises]

- Brumfit (1979) has put forward an organisational approach for learning which can be called the 'deep-end' approach. All teaching/learning is carried out in the target language, and learners' language resource is stretched to the limit. Communication can occur in a variety of different ways (group discussions, pairwork, problem solving, reading, research activities, etc.). Language items which learners lack, but which are necessary for effective communication, are presented by the teacher *during* or *subsequent to* the activity , either to the class as a whole, or to groups of learners or individuals who need them. Language items are drilled if necessary. The activity is then resumed, and the cycle continued.

  [Communicate as far as possible, using all available language resources and strategies . . . present language items shown to be necessary for effective communication . . . drill if necessary . . . further communication]

- Learning centre approach. This approach entails planning a series of separate individual, pairwork, and group activities within a unit of work. The unit comprises a number of lessons which follow the same basic format, but which are sequential. A list of the resources that will be needed, and directions for activites and exercises are kept and displayed in a learning (or 'self-access') centre in the classroom.

  At the beginning of the first lesson, the teacher introduces and practises with the class two or three of the planned activities. Learners choose one of the activities and spend the rest of the lesson carrying it out. At the beginning of each subsequent lesson, the whole class is introduced to another two or three activities, as well as the new language, strategies, skills, items of knowledge, etc. which learners will need to carry them out. Learners practise the new activities and exercises as a whole group. They then spend the rest of the lesson completing one or other of the activities to which they have been introduced. A large sheet showing the total list of the activities and exercises which learners can undertake individually, in pairs, or in groups, is pinned up. The list gives details of the activity or exercise, states what resources will be needed to complete it, and whether learners should work on this particular activity individually, in pairs, or in groups. If learners need to be reminded about particular vocabulary or phrases, these are provided as part of the instructions.

  Learners can choose the order in which they undertake the activities, but they are required to complete them all within the time allotted for the unit of work. All learners have Individual Progress Charts so that they can check off activities as they are completed. The teacher has a checksheet for the whole class (a dot is entered if the activity was attempted but not completed; a tick, and perhaps also a comment, if it was). During the whole class session, the teacher can also check with the learners to remind him/herself of what each learner has already completed and has yet to attempt.

  Subsequent lessons begin with a whole class session. The teacher revises activities already introduced, focuses on particular content which he/she has observed as being an area of difficulty, and introduces one or two further activities to expand the list of choices. The learners continue to mark off the activities which they have completed on their Individual Progress Chart. An example of a such a chart is provided in Table 2.

  Because learners are all busy directing their own learning, the teacher is free to move around amongst individuals, pairs, and groups to assist learners and to monitor language use.

  [Whole class presentation . . . individuals, pairs, or groups work on chosen activities . . . next lesson: add additional activities/exercises . . . repeat process]

Conclusion

The learner-centred approach to teaching and learning, advocated by the ALL Project and based on the eight principles of learning, is reflected in the methodological suggestions which appear above. The question of how to select, create, and adapt resources to support this approach is dealt with in the next section.

Table 2: Individual progress chart

Name ..... Class .....

Topic: Money and Shopping

	Checked by		I worked			
	me	friend	by myself	with a partner	in a group	with the class
1. Revise numbers 1 to 100						
2. Worksheet on numbers						
3. Recognise coins						
4. Worksheet on coins						
5. Recognise notes						
6. Worksheet on notes						
7. Revise foods, new words, prices						
8. Food chart — 5 or 6 items and prices						
9. Discuss exchange rate						
10. Write shopping list						
11. Discuss shopping hours						
12. Write dialogue						
13. Role-play						
14. Games 1 & 2						
15. Reader story II, Stage 3						
16. Slides — discussion						
17. Check everything						

Learner's comments:

Teacher's comments:

(after Kundler, Education Department of South Australia 1987)

Section B

Resources

Introduction

The term 'resources' is used to describe any published or unpublished material in any medium used for the purpose of language teaching and learning. The term refers to a variety of text-types which may or may not have been prepared specifically for the purposes of teaching and learning, and includes materials such as pictures, books, maps, audio and video cassettes, films, slides, etc., as well as hardware such as audiovisual equipment and computers. The term also includes human resources and resources which are outside as well as inside the classroom. The teacher and the learners are themselves important resources, as are people and places in the target language community.

With the change in emphasis in current curriculum design away from content-oriented syllabuses towards syllabuses which emphasise both content and process, there is a need for language teachers to maintain a judicious integration of both content and process. When selecting and creating resources, teachers need to ensure that there is an appropriate and integrated spread of activities which emphasise language use, and exercises which provide a focus on language elements, skills, strategies, and items of general knowledge for use in activities. Teachers also need to provide a variety of resources to accommodate differences in the motivation, ability, and learning style of individual learners.

Resources should be selected not only on the basis of whether or not they respond to the needs of the learners as potential communicators in the outside world, but also to their needs as language learners in the classroom.

Criteria for selecting, adapting, and creating resources

The selection, adaptation, and creation of resources will involve important considerations relating to the resource itself, to the particular learning context in which it will be used, and to the way in which it will be used.

Selection should be carried out carefully and should be based on the following considerations:

- the nature of the learner group
- the purpose(s) for which the resource is to be used
- teacher needs and preferences
- practicalities and general considerations

The nature of the learner group

The following questions relate to the range of criteria for the selection of resources appropriate to the needs of a particular groups of learners.

- Is the resource appropriate for the proficiency level of the group of learners who will be using it at the particular Stage of language learning? Does it make cognitive demands which challenge but do not frustrate the learners? Will it provide experience of achievement?
- Does the resource help to meet the immediate language learning needs of the learners? (This will vary according to the prior knowledge and experience of the target language which the learners bring to the learning).
- Do the learners have appropriate social skills for effective use of the resource?
- Does the resource appeal to the imagination and expand the interests of the learners?
- Does the resource cater for differences in learning style, e.g. ear-based learning and eye-based learning? (Refer to Book 1, *Principle 1*, for further information on learning styles.)

Teachers will become aware through observation, negotiation, and discussion, of the particular needs, interests, and abilities of learners. They will also need to ascertain what knowledge and capabilities individual learners bring with them to the classroom, and the extent to which learners are able to manage their own learning, and provide resources accordingly.

The purpose(s) for which the resource is to be used

The following questions relate to the major purposes or goals for which resources might be used in the classroom. (Not all criteria need apply to a single resource.)

- Does the resource help to promote communicative use of the target language (communication goals)?
- Does the resource help to increase learners' knowledge and understanding of the target language community and culture? Does the resource generate a real or realistic sociocultural context (sociocultural goals)?
- Does the resource help to develop learners' ability to take responsibility for their own learning (learning-how-to-learn goals)?
- Does the resource help to promote learners' awareness of the role and nature of language and culture and its influence on human behaviour (language and cultural awareness goals)?
- Does the resource contribute to the development of learners' general knowledge (general knowledge goals)?

Since the goals and the objectives derived from them are always integrated with each other in a well prepared activity, a good resource will more than likely be used to help achieve more than one of the goals and objectives at any one time.

Teacher needs and preferences

The following questions relate to the consideration of teachers' needs and preferences when selecting resources (adapted from Candlin 1979).

- Does the resource extend the contributions of the teacher?
- Does the resource exploit the teacher's competence rather than restrain it?
- Does the teacher feel that he/she can work well with the resource?
- Does the resource fit with the teacher's philosophy of language teaching and learning?
- Does the resource interest the teacher?

Practicalities and general considerations

The following questions relate to practical and general considerations which need to be kept in mind when selecting resources:

- Is the resource presented in an imaginative/appealing way for the particular group of learners?
- Is the resource economical in terms of preparation time?
- Is the resource practical in terms of its need for classroom space and facilities?
- Is the resource versatile and able to be used again and again with adaptations for different teaching purposes and for different groups?
- From the learner's point of view, is the resource simple to follow? How much teacher explanation is required for learners to understand how they can use the resource?
- Is the material free from racial bias? Is if free from sex-stereotyping? Is it culturally appropriate?
- Does the resource allow for all learners to be actively involved in the learning process?

Selecting resources which promote communication

The ALL Project's second and third principles of language learning state that learners learn a language best when they are provided with opportunities to participate in communicative use of the target language in a wide range of activities, and when they are exposed to communicative data which is comprehensible and relevant to their own needs and interests.

The term 'communicative use' refers to the use of language for a purpose beyond that of merely practising grammatical forms. Communication is not restricted to conversation, but covers a whole range of language activities such as listening for information, playing games, writing letters, solving problems in a group, reading for pleasure, etc.

Communication occurs when learners use language in a purposeful and personal way.

It is possible to create an atmosphere and a context in a classroom environment which provides learners with the opportunity to use the target language for a purpose. The careful selection of resources which focus on communicative use of the target language and provide comprehensible and relevant communciative data will help to create an appropriate atmosphere and context.

Resources which Provide Communicative Data in the Target Language

The issue of authenticity

In recent years there has been much emphasis on attempting to provide learners with 'authentic' resources. This normally refers to resources created by background speakers for communicative purposes with other background speakers in the world outside the classroom, such as newspaper articles, magazine articles, television features, stories, cartoons, real signs and notices, public announcements, menus, and the like. While such materials may reflect one aspect of authenticity, there are other aspects that also need to be considered if the term 'authentic' is to be meaningful. These are discussed below:

Authenticity of purpose For a resource to be authentic in the outside world, it must have some personal relevance to the readers or listeners for whom it was created. They must see some point in being asked to process the information in it. The information may be intrinsically interesting and enjoyable, or there may be some extrinsic purpose (as in the case of recipes, road maps, telephone directories, menus, etc.). If the resource is of no personal relevance to readers or listeners, they will simply cease to process the information contained within it.

Authenticity of response For a resource to remain authentic in the real world, the reader or listener must respond to it in an authentic way. We do not normally use poetry to learn about past tenses, or read stories solely to acquire new vocabulary; we read poetry or stories to be entertained. We watch TV documentaries because they entertain and inform. We listen to announcements in airports or railway stations in order to find out information relevant to our travel plans. Thus, for resources to be considered authentic, it is often what the reader or listener actually does with them that is more important than where they come from.

Authenticity of conditions For material to be used authentically in the real world certain conditions are usually present. When we use language we are always engaged in negotiating its meaning (whether with other people, or with a written or spoken text), and we call upon a number of strategies and supports to help us to do this. When we read at home, for example, we normally have time to consult a dictionary. When listening to others in conversation, we can normally ask them to repeat or rephrase something. Thus, authenticity in the use of language in the 'real world' implies real world conditions.

Authenticity of purpose to the learner as learner There is one aspect in the concern for authenticity that is frequently forgotten. Learners are usually not in the 'real world' when they receive classroom communicative data. They are in a classroom, and, as such, the teacher's task is to respond to their objective and subjective needs as learners of a language. There is, therefore, another perspective of authenticity which needs to be taken into consideration. Materials are needed not only to serve an authentic communicative purpose, but also to serve the purpose of language learning, in order to be authentic to the purposes for which learners find themselves in the classroom.The way in which this form of authenticity is realised depends, of course, on the particular view that one holds as to how language learning is best promoted. The ALL Project espouses the view that this is best cultivated through an appropriate balance between helping learners to use the target language for communicative purposes and deliberately focusing at times on forms, skills, strategies, and items of general knowledge. Resources need to be selected or created to serve both these ends.

Other factors to consider when selecting and using communicative data:

- the communicative data used should provide aural and/or visual clues and other contextual props, especially in the early Stages, to help learners predict meaning and make sense of the text

- learners should be exposed to data with a range of different registers, accents, intonation, and stress patterns, and also examples of colloquial language (clichés, idioms etc.) and 'social noises' (techniques for interrupting, etc.)
- pre-listening/reading activities (discussion, picture study, etc.) can help to familiarise learners with the content of the input
- post-listening/reading activities should be designed to increase rather than test comprehension
- the text should not be too long, especially in the early Stages when there should also be opportunities for a non-linguistic response (e.g. an action of some kind) to what is heard or read.

This section provides information on communicative data under the following headings:

Teacher talk
Other classroom talk
Recordings of talk (audio and video)
Specially prepared written information
Other classroom written information
Realia and written texts from outside the classroom

Teacher talk

An important source of communicative data for classroom learners is 'teacher talk' in the target language, whether it be for the purposes of socialisation, classroom management, negotiating activities, providing feedback and evaluation, discussing a topic that has arisen, or explaining language phenomena.

It has become clear that when teachers who are (reasonably) fluent in the target language use the target language in the classroom for the purposes outlined above, a valuable opportunity to provide comprehensible and relevant communicative data to assist learners to internalise a communicative resource is gained. Teacher talk in the target language can be made comprehensible right from the start by helping the learners to use their familiarity with the classroom learning context to assist them to understand what is being said. Books have to be got out, desks tidied, windows opened, papers distributed, questions about absences asked, etc. in all classrooms, and the language forms associated with the completion of such tasks should become familiar to learners relatively rapidly.

In order to establish an area of experience in which it is normal for learners to actually have genuine communicative needs in the target language, it is sensible to establish ground rules for the classroom from the very beginning whereby the teacher will use the target language at all times, other than when it is impossible to communicate except through English. What is said by the teacher must be comprehensible, however, otherwise learners will lose interest and possibly even become alienated. If English is used by the teacher for most classroom interaction, the hidden message that is being given to learners is: 'Use English like me, when you have something real to say. Only use the target language when you're doing language exercises, question and answer work, or other pedagogical but largely non-communicative things'. This means that learners learn to associate the use of the target language with medium-oriented work, but not with message-passing. Because there is a focus on form, but little focus on meaning, very little target language data is internalised.

It is relatively easy to accustom a class of beginners to the fact that the teacher will use the target language most of the time; it is much more difficult to introduce this concept to a class that has become used to the teacher using English as the normal means of classroom interaction. It takes a great deal of time before beginners are able to use the target language productively, but the comprehension ability among such learners, when they are exposed to a lot of teacher talk in the target language, is noticeably better in classes where teachers use it for communicative purposes.

The teacher can also use the target language to:

- tell stories and anecdotes (see Morgan and Rinvolucri 1983)
- issue commands and instructions which learners have to carry out physically (Asher 1969). This can take the form of games where learners act as robots and carry out commands, or where they play 'Simon says'; or the target language can be used for conducting a gymnastics or aerobics session, or for a cooking or model-making lesson

- challenge learners to draw what the teacher has described, or to recognise which picture from among a number of alternative pictures, is being described
- challenge learners to follow instructions on a map and mark an appropriate spot
- play games such as bingo, etc.

It will be noted that many of the above suggestions involve learners in little or no actual productive speech. They are involved instead in non-verbal actions (moving, drawing, doing things, making things, choosing, marking maps, covering up numbers, etc.) in order to prove that they have processed and understood what has been said to them. For second language learners, such activities are particularly suitable in the beginning Stages, when they are in a largely pre-productive phase in their learning.

It is helpful for teachers to be aware of how talk can be made simple so that it can be adapted to the level of the learners. Various strategies of the sort that fluent background-speakers use when adapting their talk to learners can be employed. These include:

- a slow rate of speech (clear articulation, longer pauses, exaggerated intonation, etc.)
- comprehensible vocabulary (less slang, fewer idiomatic turns of phrase, avoidance of pronouns through the repetition of names for people and things, etc.)
- extra definition and explanation strategies (repetition, exaggerated use of gesture, facial expressions, etc.)
- simplified syntax (short phrases set out conceptually, rather than longer utterances involving subordinate clauses or long embedded descriptions; simple propositions giving a clear topic focus, e.g. 'Do you remember James . . . the one with the beard . . . the big black beard?' rather than: 'Do you remember the man who had the big black beard, who was called James?', or: 'Do you remember big black-bearded James?' etc.)
- techniques which facilitate discourse (e.g. suggesting a possible answer within a question, questions which require a simple 'yes' or 'no' as answer, confirmation checks and clarification requests), and techniques for building in redundancy (e.g. saying the same thing twice in different ways).

When using their first language teachers will automatically draw on such simplifying strategies, without conscious thought as to what they are doing. It is sometimes more difficult, however, for those teachers who are teaching what is for them a second language, to adopt such strategies. A more conscious effort based on the principles outlined above may well help. It should be noted that simplifying talk, and indeed simplifying written texts for learners, does not only mean simplifying the difficult structures and vocabulary, though it may involve this. Rather, it is also a matter of providing as much contextual, redundant, and clarificatory support as learners seem to require. In later Stages, less support of this kind will be necessary. It is important that the teacher continue to use the target language in normal classroom interaction as well as for an increasingly wide range of purposes.

Teacher questioning patterns have been the subject of recent research. Two types, 'display' and 'referential' questions are of particular interest. Display questions (sometimes called closed questions) are questions asked by the teacher, the answers to which are known by the teacher. For example:

Teacher (looking out of the window): Is the sun shining today?
Learner (looking out of the window): Yes.
Teacher: Good.

Referential questions (sometimes called open questions) are questions to which the teacher does not know the answer. For example:

Teacher: What did you do last weekend?

Teachers need to be aware that referential questions are a much more effective questioning technique for eliciting communicative use of the target language than display questions. However, display questions appear to be much more prevalent than referential questions in classroom language learning (Long 1981). Though this is likely to be necessary in the beginning Stages, teachers are encouraged to use referential questions as much as possible to maximise language use in activities.

Other classroom talk

Learners will also learn from each other's talk in the target language. Since they will often use interlanguage which is full of error, this might be seen as a drawback. It can indeed be argued, as Prabhu (1980) does, that in the initial stages of second language learning, it is better to attempt to ensure that interaction occurs with the teacher taking the major role, in order that fluent background-speaker-like communicative data, rather than data which is full of error, is present as much as possible. It can also be argued, however, that learners will learn better from the interlanguage data of other learners, which is slightly more advanced than their own, but closer to it than the teacher's more distant fluent background-speaker-like model (Krashen 1981). At the same time it is important for teachers to be aware of the phenomenon of stabilisation, where language development comes to a halt. This can occur in classrooms where too much time has been devoted to learners talking to each other (at their stage of interlanguage), and not enough to the provision of communicative data of the fluent background-speaker variety.

As well as learning from each other's talk in the target language, learners may also benefit from the communicative data provided when outsiders who are background-speakers visit the classroom, whether these be learners from other classes, other teachers, advisers, consultants, parents, visitors from the target language community, or other special guests. It is useful to capitalise on such opportunities, and where possible, to get the visitors to participate in communicative activities with the learners. Where it is appropriate and where it can be arranged, it also helps if the school principal uses the target language at school assemblies perhaps, or when giving messages over the school internal broadcast system. In these ways it is demonstrated that languages are valued and their use within the school becomes a normal event rather than simply a formal classroom contrivance.

Links with other classes can often be arranged, where tapes of learners talking are made and exchanged. This can be done at a local, intranational, or international level, and can be used to provide authentic and interesting data from young people of the same age. Such material is often highly motivating. For suggestions as to how to set up and maintain such a class link, see Jones (1979), and Clark and Hamilton (1984).

Recordings of talk (audio and video)

In order to provide a wide range of talk in a variety of formats, and in an appropriately expanding range of contexts, involving a diversity of accents and registers, it is essential for teachers and/or school language departments to build up banks of audio and video recordings. While teacher and other classroom talk will tend to focus on the sort of talk which is generally associated with the classroom, audio and video recordings can help to bring in the outside world and prepare the learner to operate within it.

Many suggestions can be made as to how to go about building up banks of suitable listening material. In the early Stages, it is probable that simplified material will have to be looked for among learning materials produced commercially or in home-made form with the help of available fluent background-speakers. In intermediate or later Stages, it is also possible to draw on such sources as radio, TV, records, film, etc.

When creating banks of graded listening materials, it is important for teachers to attempt to strike an appropriate balance between responding to the needs of learners as potential communicators in the outside world, and as learners in the classroom. For this reason, it is suggested that all listening materials should aim to fulfil the needs of learners both as communicators and as learners. Materials should be personally relevant to learners, and should also serve some genuine communicative purpose.

In order to build up a graded bank of attractive, varied, and effective listening resources, it is sensible to select from sources in the target language community and from commercially produced language teaching materials, and also to create home-made materials with the help of fluent background-speakers. It must be remembered, however, that much spoken material soon loses its contemporary relevance. A library of listening resources can never really be complete or finite, and constantly needs to be updated.

A list of possible text-types which might be included in a *listening library* is provided below:

announcements
advertisements

telephone messages

extracts from media sources (news, weather, interviews, traffic reports, documentaries, films, etc.)

audiovisual presentations

spoken texts from schools in the target language community involved in class-to-class exchange of audio and videotapes (e.g. self-portraits, information about school, local community, etc.)

directions, instructions, recipes

situational dialogues and conversations which involve the listener in some way

short talks

stories, anecdotes, jokes

plays

poetry

songs

story readings (accompanied by written text)

Specially prepared written information

The equivalent of teacher talk in written form is the sort of written information that is provided in textbooks or by materials prepared by the teacher to assist learners in their use of textbooks and other commercially produced materials. It might be suggested that all the written instructions, descriptions of activities, explanations of formal phenomena, and presentations of linguistic and cultural information could and should be given in the target language as soon as it becomes possible to do this. As with teacher talk, it is essential that such written information be comprehensible. Teacher support and dictionary support will be vital. (Learners will also need to be taught strategies for coping with unknown items when no support is available). Like teacher talk, it constitutes a valuable means of providing learners with relevant communicative data if much of the written information needed for completion of activities is in the target language.

Other classroom written information

Much written and pictorial communicative data can be provided incidentally in the classroom, through the use of posters, notices, labels on objects within the room, and wallsheets containing various types of information prepared by the teacher or by the learners themselves. Collections of learners' writing can also form a source of communicative data for other learners to read. One of the most useful forms of written communicative data can come from penfriend exchanges, organised on an individual or a class basis with another person or class, preferably in the target language community. In Australia exchanges can often be organised within the country as well as internationally. Learners often find such letters more motivating than other forms of written information, because of their interpersonal flavour. Penfriend exchanges can form part of more ambitious schemes for inter-class links, which can include exchanges of written information on sociocultural matters such as life in school, the teenage pop-world, sport and leisure interests, and so on (see Jones 1979, or Clark and Hamilton 1984).

Realia and written texts from outside the classroom

Written material should not simply be contrived to present particular grammatical forms, or particular functional/notional exponents. Ideally it should also serve some communicative purpose and have some personal relevance to learners.

It is sensible to search for written material in the outside world (signs, menus, postcards, brochures, maps, timetables, advertisements, recipes, etc.), and from commercial language teaching sources (cartoon strips, stories, plays, poetry, songs, etc.) and to develop activities based on these.

A list of possible text-types which might be included in a *reading library* is provided below (such materials might come from sources in the target language community, from commercial sources, or be created by teachers or learners):

signs, notices, posters

forms

lists of goods and prices, menus

maps, timetables, and other tabulated information (with or without pictorial information)

advertisements, publicity handouts

diaries, notes

messages, telegrams, computer printouts

postcards, letters (personal and official)

instructions, rules of games, etc.

recipes, labels

brochures, leaflets, catalogues, guidebooks

extracts from magazines and newspapers (e.g. headlines, articles, reports, news, weather, interviews, sport, etc.)

puzzles, quizzes

questionnaires

scripts from schools involved in class to class correspondence (e.g. self-portraits, information about school, local community, hobbies, etc.)

stories, extracts from stories

cartoon strips, comics

short stories, plays

poetry

songs

A wealth of resource materials, in addition to those indicated above, is available in the community. Examples include:

articles from the ethnic press

programs from ethnic radio

documentaries, films from SBS TV

videos (news programs, variety shows, sports events, documentaries and films from the target country)

tape recordings

films (particularly during film festivals)

drama (particularly during drama festivals)

information from ethnic clubs and societies

pamphlets (e.g. those translated for the Department of Social Security or the Department of Tourism)

Literature in the target language can be a particularly valuable source of communicative data. Literature can be an effective vehicle for language learning at any age, and can include stories, short stories, folktales, poems, rhymes, songs, and plays. Traditional stories, songs, and rhymes often provide repetitive language which assists learners to understand and internalise language forms. Stories which are close to the learners' own culture, such as well-known fairy stories and folktales, are very effective for language learning. Illustrations in children's books can challenge the imagination and can help to extend meaning for readers and listeners. Literature which reflects the culture of the target language community is also a valuable source of sociocultural data.

When teachers select literature, they will need to consider the following questions:

- Is the language in the text appropriate to the level of learners' understanding? (A certain amount of guessing and prediction of language which is slightly above learners' current language level is useful, as long as clues are present to assist understanding).
- Does the presentation have clues to increase meaning and prediction for learners? (e.g. If the story is related orally, will the teacher accompany the story with clear gestures and facial expressions to assist meaning? If the story is written, are there illustrations to assist meaning? Is the story predictable to some degree? Does the poem, song or rhyme repeat lines to help understanding and learning?)
- Does the literature provide opportunities for direct cultural experience?

Conclusion

The teacher's major task in selecting, creating, and adapting resources which provide communicative data in the target language is to create the sort of conditions in which learners, as both learners and communicators, find the data interesting, relevant, and comprehensible, and its use quite natural. (For examples, see Jones 1984, Kruger 1985, Ladousse 1983, Maley and Rinvolucri 1983, Ur 1984.)

Resources and Activities which Promote Communicative Use of the Target Language

This section provides descriptions of various types of resources and related activities which teachers can use to assist in the promotion of active use of the target language in the classroom. Some activities require teachers to create material to supplement the activity, others are based on commercially prepared materials or communicative data available in the target language community.

Communicative use of the target language is best promoted by resources which:

- generate activities which serve a genuine communicative purpose and have personal relevance or are of real interest to the learner
- provide a context in which learners will want and need to engage in meaningful (as opposed to mechanical) use of the target language
- generate activities which involve authentic conditions, e.g. allow the learner to employ communicative strategies (such as using a dictionary or asking someone to repeat or rephrase what was said).

This section provides information on:

Problem solving activities
Information/opinion/affective gap activities
Personalised activities
Games
Use of pictures
Activities involving processing information from various sources
Literature-based activities
Drama activities
Writing activities
Focus and shaping exercises
Integration of activities

Problem solving activities

Problem solving activities bring into the language learning process a natural motivation for learners to overcome obstacles. They also contribute to the development of learning-how-to-learn skills and strategies. Problem solving activities might be performed individually, in groups, or in the whole class situation, depending on the nature of the activity.

Prabhu uses intellectual problem solving activities in his programs. These are designed to engage the learners' intellect so that there is 'a genuine preoccupation with understanding, thinking out, and doing or saying something' (Prabhu 1980). His activities involve, for example, processing information in order to make a mathematical calculation.

Example

> 'If it takes 20 minutes to go from A to B, and 30 minutes to go from B to C, and if it takes 5 minutes to travel 2 kilometres, how many kilometres are there between A and C?'

Prabhu observes that language is internalised best *when the mind is focused on the activity and not on the language learning itself.* Resources selected or created by the teacher need to engage the learners' interest and their desire to deal with the particular problem presented.

Others who have established collections of such intellectual puzzles and challenges are Maley and Grellet 1981, De Bono 1982, Maley 1982, and Care and Debyser 1978; the last mentioned have collected verbal games and puzzles.

A similar principle applies in some of the scenarios devised by Di Pietro (1987), though the emphasis in the problems here relates to social conventions rather than intellectual processing. Examples of such scenarios are as follows:

Example 1 The Distraught Babysitter

Episode 1.

Role A: You are a teenager. You have been offered your first babysitting job. You really want the money. Your mother has to give her permission. Discuss it with her.

Role B: Your teenager has been offered a babysitting job. It will be his or her first job (providing you give your permission). Will you do so? There is an important test coming up at school tomorrow.

Episode 2.

Role A: The woman who hired you to be her babysitter tells you that she and her husband will be at a very important reception. The baby has not been feeling well, but has been given some medicine and is now sleeping peacefully. A phone number is left for you to call if there is any serious difficulty. Otherwise, she and her husband must not be called away from the reception. Two hours after the woman and her husband have left, the baby awakens and begins to cough. The cough will not stop, and the baby seems to be choking. What will you do? Whom will you call?

The other role in episode 2 depends on who is called by the babysitter. It can be the babysitter's mother, in which case role B is the following:

Role B: Your teenager calls you from the home where he or she is babysitting to tell you that the baby seems to be very ill and choking. What advice do you give? Should the hospital be called? What can you do to help?

If the mother of the baby is called, then the following role is appropriate:

Role B: The babysitter calls you to tell you that the baby seems to be ill and is choking. What do you do? Will you leave this important reception? Is there any advice you can give the babysitter? (Di Pietro 1987)

Example 2

You are not feeling well. You catch a bus to get to the doctor's office. You are relieved to find that there is one free seat on the bus and you take it. An elderly woman gets on the bus at the next stop, loaded down with packages. She stands in front of you. What will you do? Will you give her your seat? What will you say to her?(Di Pietro 1987)

Any number of problems can be set for learners to try to solve, and these are best selected by the teacher and learners together to ensure that the problem is appropriate to the Stage of language learning, and is relevant and worth solving from the learners' point of view.

Other problem solving activities include:

- crossword puzzles
- jigsaw puzzles
- solving real-life problems (the situation is given, the difficulties presented, and learners asked to decide what they would do if they were in this situation)

Example 1

Learner A pretends to be in a shop in the target country, trying to buy particular kinds of fruit and vegetables. The teacher, or learner B, sets up the situation with unexpected questions and answers (perhaps worked out beforehand, away from learner A) so that learner A must create language in order to be able to cope with the unexpected.

Example 2

Learners role-play using public transport. Learner A gets on the bus to pay his/her fare. Learner B, the bus driver, has been primed to say, 'Sorry, this is the wrong bus'. Learner A must use language strategies to meet the changed situation.

Many other problem solving activities are likely to involve role-play.

Example

A group of learners is given a map which shows the position of a group of hikers on a school excursion. The group is told (either in writing, or by the teacher) that the hikers are in difficulty: the teacher and four of the hikers are sick, and one of the boys has twisted his ankle. Two hikers are left. One is all right, but another does not know the way to the town. It's raining heavily, and the nearest town is four kilometres away. The learners must solve the problem, using the target language.

(For further examples, see Brent and Cook 1986, and Di Pietro 1987.)

Information/opinion/affective gap activities

Examples of activities which promote active use of the target language generally contain a certain 'gap' which learners fill during the course of the activity. This gap may be present because one or more of the learners involved in the activity lack certain information (an information gap activity), or because there is a difference between the opinions or emotions of the participants (opinion gap and affective gap activities).

Once teachers have grasped the principles that lie behind the creation of activities with such gaps, they can create a whole range of communication activities (and necessary resources to accompany them such as cue cards), involving any number of variations, without necessarily having to rely on textbooks or other commercial sources to do this for them.

The concept of the information gap derives from Cherry's work on information theory (Cherry 1956). Cherry maintains: 'Information can only be received when there is doubt; and doubt implies the existence of alternatives, where choice, selection, or discrimination is called for.' Language teachers have built upon this concept (e.g. Rixon 1979), and a range of activities embodying it is now widely used.

Information/opinion/affective gap activities are likely to be successful, since they frequently simulate real-life situations. Learners have different information, or mismatched information, and have to put their various items of information together in order to complete a task.

Example

Learners A and B each have incomplete information in the target language about how to get from X to Y by train, about how much it costs, and how long it takes. (But together, they have all the necessary information.) They are given a certain amount of money, and are told to consult together to find out the cheapest way to get from X to Y before a certain time. They must both extract the relevant information from their data, and then exchange this with each other, before deciding together how and when to travel.

In the following opinion gap activity, learners have the same information and must discuss it and come to some common conclusion or decision:

Example

Two learners are told: 'You are going on a holiday together. Here is a tourist brochure about the holiday resort you want to go to. Choose how to get there, how long to stay, where to stay, what you'd like to do and see there, and when and how to return. You have $1,000 to spend between you.' Learners must search out the information, extract what is relevant, discuss it, express their opinions as to what would be best, and reach a conclusion.

There are many collections of ideas and of material for information/opinion/affective gap activities. Some of these are as follows: Ur (1981), Geddes and Sturtridge (1979 and 1982), Byrne and Rixon (1979), Clark and Hamilton (1984), Klippel (1984), and Hamilton et al. (1985).

Jigsaw activities are a variation of the information/opinion/affective gap activity. In jigsaw activities, different participants are given parts of the total picture. The problem can only be solved, or the total information can only be put together, when participants engage in discussion.

Examples

Strip stories (members of a group are each given one or two isolated sentences of a story, (the group as a whole is in possession of all sentences in the story) and the group must piece the story together).

Cartoons (members of the group are given one picture each from a cartoon, and they are required to arrange the pictures in the right order). Familiar cartoons can be used with the English captions replaced with captions in the target language.

A factor to consider in creating information/opinion/affective gap activities is whether they will be one-way or two-way tasks (Long, 1980, cited in Crookes and Rulon 1985). In a one-way task, only one of the participants has all the required information, whereas in a two-way task, both participants must communicate and share their information in order to carry out the task.

Example

Learner A and learner B are each given a picture. The pictures are almost identical, but contain certain specific differences. The learners must identify the differences by describing their pictures to each other. This type of two-way task is referred to by Long as 'Spot the Difference' (in Crookes and Rulon 1985).

One-way communication tasks, in which only one participant has information to communicate, do not appear to be as effective in promoting communication as two-way tasks (Long and Porter 1985). Two-way tasks have been found to be more effective for language learning in the early stages than free conversations, since in free conversation there is little obligation for the participants to remain on the topic. Abrupt or unsignalled topic change following communicative difficulties is a characteristic of conversation in the early stages of language learning (Long, 1981 (a) and (b) cited in Crookes and Rulon 1985).

Information/opinion/affective gap activities have frequently been created as *pairwork activities*. Pairwork is a useful technique since it allows learners to use language naturally. Each pair is able to operate independently and at a pace which is suitable for the particular learners involved. This technique also allows learners to perform in a less stressful environment, because they are not performing in front of the rest of the class. Resources for pairwork generally consist of two sheets, copied so that half the class has the activity description for 'Learner A' and the remaining half for 'Learner B'. It is quite easy to build up a bank of activity sheets which can be duplicated as required. Furthermore, most of the activities will be applicable to all other languages taught in the school, with some minor adjustments.

Typical pairwork activities may include guessing games, giving and following instructions, role-playing activities, problem solving activities, information/opinion/affective gap activities, as well as many other games (see other headings in this section).

(For examples, see Hamilton and Wheeldon 1985.)

Personalised activities

These activities draw upon the need that people have for self-expression, and the need to communicate subjective ideas, personal impressions, and imagined situations. Satisfaction of this need is psychologically fulfilling and basic to much of human language.

Expressive writing can be a valuable outlet for self-expression. Writing need not be complex or long, and can be accompanied by illustrations drawn by the learner. For young children, the illustration can be the basis for the language. The writing can be either scribed by the teacher, or written by the child (see the *Method* section of this book for a brief discussion of process writing.) Examples of such personalised activities include:

opinion gap activities
expressive writing (based on personal experiences)
questionnaires, surveys
drama activities
role-play activities

(For specific examples, see Ur 1981.)

Games

Games are a valuable tool in language teaching/learning. They exploit the social nature of the classroom and can provide a focus for both the receptive and productive use of the target language. Just like the information/opinion/affective gap activities, games allow learners to focus on an activity and internalise the language without necessarily focusing on the language itself. Language learning games include com-

munication games, in which there is no attempt to control the language that could or should be used in any one game. Emphasis is placed on success in communication rather than on structured practice, and learners are provided with contexts in which they want and need to engage in meaningful use of the target language.

Example 1

Learners look at a set of pictures of different animals. After they are familiar with the pictures and have practised describing the animals, one learner picks out a picture and describes it in the target language to the others. The others have to guess which animal is being described.

Example 2

Learners are divided into groups of four or five. Each learner writes a fortune or prediction for each of the others in the group. Then, learners exchange the fortunes they have written for each other. Each must read out his/her fortunes and comment, for example, on whether some of them are the same, on what he/she had actually hoped for, or which predictions he/she finds unlikely (Wright et al. 1984).

Example 3

The class sends one of its members out of the classroom. They hide an object in the classroom, and when they are ready, they call the learner back in. He/she is directed by the rest of the class to the object. The class can have fun by misdirecting, and by placing the object in an unusual location.

Example 4

Learners play '20 Questions'. An object is chosen secretly by one learner, and the others in the group are allowed to ask 20 questions (which can be answered only by 'yes' or 'no') to find out what the object is.

Games can also be used in focus exercises where discrete items of language, skills, and strategies are practised. It should be noted that because learners are speaking the target language as they play these games, their involvement in socialising will involve real communication.

Example: A version of bingo

The teacher writes a list of words for revision on the board. Learners are asked to select a certain number of words from the list and write them down. The teacher gives the definition of the word, or a clue of some kind, or uses the word in a sentence. If the learner has that word listed, he/she underlines it and writes it a second time. The teacher continues until someone has all their words underlined and calls out 'Bingo!'.

Games can be played by the whole class, or by groups, pairs, or individuals. As well as being used to develop communicative use of the language, and to practise language forms, games can be used for diagnosis, as well as for revision.

The objective of the game should be clear to the learners and it should have a definite finishing point. It should contain some kind of information or opinion gap to challenge the players, and cooperaton should be encouraged. The language to be learnt should be intrinsic to the activity rather than imposed, and there should be sufficient use of language involved to justify the use of the game.

There are many different types of games which can be played in the language classroom. They include:

- linking and matching games
- card and board games
- psychology games (which might lead to a greater awareness of the human mind and senses)
- word games (which focus on words rather than sentences)
- true/false games (someone makes a statement which is true or false, and the point of the game is to decide which it is)
- memory games (challenging learners' ability to remember)
- question/answer games
- guessing and speculating games
- story games (See Wright, et al. 1984)

(For examples, see David 1982, Palmer and Rodgers in Kinsella (ed.) 1985, and Wright 1984.)

Use of pictures

Pictures can facilitate speculation and discussion in class. They can be used as a basis for the practice of specific language.

The teacher can use a picture to focus on particular vocabulary, or alternatively on language related to actions, situations, etc. Learners can be asked to look at a picture and imagine who the characters are. What do they do in life? How do they feel? etc. (Specific questions can be related to each picture.)

If pictures of people, places, and events in the target culture, or in the source country, or in Australia are available, they can become a valuable source of socio-cultural data. Teachers can direct the learners to particular features of the target culture in a picture. They can also draw learners' attention to differences that might exist between the Australian environment and the environment in the source country. A series of pictures, for example, showing a number of different types of houses in the source country will help to clarify the concept of 'home' which might be different from the Australian concept.

The perception and interpretation of pictures can vary from one culture to another, and different cultures can view pictures in different ways. For example, non-Chinese background Australians might view a picture of people shopping in a market in China where many types of unexpected food products are for sale, with some distaste, whereas Chinese people would see the market full of delicious and interesting products to buy. The feelings of those looking at the picture will be different, and no doubt the focus will be on different parts of the picture. Teachers need to be aware of this factor when they are selecting pictures and creating language learning activities based on them. Examples of activities involving the use of pictures include:

- writing captions for pictures
- labelling objects in a picture
- sequencing jumbled pictures (learners put pictures back in the correct order and tell the story of what is happening — cartoon strips are useful for this)
- cartoon strips with empty speech bubbles (learners fill in what the characters are saying)
- comparing and contrasting pictures
- considering possible relationships between pictures
- describing key features so that someone else may identify them or represent them in a similar way (See Wright et al. 1984)
- as a stimulus for writing (free or guided).

Example:

The resource is a picture of a café in the target country, and the learners are asked to imagine that they are sitting outside the café writing to a friend, and describing the café to the friend.

(For examples, see Maley 1980.)

Activities involving processing information from various sources

Information processing might involve one or more of the following processes: classifying, summarising, analysing, interpreting/translating, reproducing, synthesising, discussing with others, reproducing in some form, recording in note form, and so on.

Different types of information processing activities, based on the kind of communicative data resource described in the previous section, will be suitable for different age and ability levels and a range of interests. Examples of such activities:

- project work
- completion tasks (e.g. filling in forms, tables, charts, documents, labelling diagrams and pictures)
- reading for gist or detail
- listening for gist or detail
- note taking
- report writing
- preparing briefing material (e.g. agendas, itineraries, notes)
- letter writing
- memo writing
- classification tasks
- interpretation and transformation of visual or tabular information into the written or spoken mode, and vice versa
- gap filling tasks involving prediction from context

transcription
guided writing
sequencing and matching activities
transcription of numbers, names, dates, times, etc.

(For examples, see Limb and Bourgeois 1981.)

Literature-based activities

Literature can be used to provide communicative data (reading stories, listening to stories, poems, songs, etc.) and to encourage learners to write their own short stories, poems, etc. Learners can also learn to recite poems or sing simple songs.

Activities and exercises to teach certain essential language forms in the text can be undertaken before, during, and/or after the experience with the piece of literature. Examples of literature-based activities include:

listening to stories read by the teacher (the book is held up for learners to see the pictures, if any)
listening to stories recounted by the teacher (without the book)
learning simple poems and rhymes by heart
copying down and illustrating simple poems and rhymes
predicting what might happen next
reading stories and plays aloud in small groups
drawing a picture of a favourite part of the story, and describing it in the target language underneath
retelling the story with the teacher's help (e.g. the teacher asks questions and records learners' responses on the board to compile a summary of the story)
pretending to be a character in the story, poem, or play and describing oneself
writing some questions about the story, poem, or play for another learner to answer
dramatising parts or all of the story, poem, or play
writing a similar story, poem, or play
completing an unfinished story or play
extracting sociocultural data (when the literature reflects the culture of the target community)
answering questions about the story (oral or written)

(For examples, see Rinvolucri 1983, and Wajnrby 1986.)

Drama activities

Drama can play an important part in the language learning/teaching process. There are many different applications for drama in the language classroom, and the amount of drama used will depend, among other things, on the preferences of the teacher and the learners.

Activities involving role-play lie on a continuum with practice of the target language at one end and the meaningful use of the target language at the other (see *Typology of activities and exercises*, Table 2 in Book 2). At the practice end of the continuum are activities where items of language are regurgitated and rehearsed. At the other end, the learner might assume the role of another person and create language naturally as the situation in the role-play develops. Role-play can occur at any place on the continuum, and can thus be scripted, semi-scripted, or totally open-ended. Examples of activities involving drama include:

story telling
role-playing
learners writing and performing in their own plays
using puppets to dramatise familiar or created stories
developing characterisation in a play or a story
developing actions to go with songs and poems.

Writing activities

Different resources can be used to stimulate or provide props for writing. For example:

- a sequence of pictures which depict a story with some vocabulary provided
- the first part of the sentence/text might be provided, for learners to complete
- the last part of the sentence/text might be provided, for learners to complete
- short, simple sentences are provided, and learners connect the sentences with appropriate connectives.

An example of a resource which sets a context for writing:

Learners are provided with a letter from a penfriend. They are told: 'You will be visiting your penfriend in the next holidays. You have just received this letter from him. He needs to know immediately when you will be arriving for your holiday. Write a reply'.

Drafting and redrafting of written work, encouraged by the process writing technique (see the *Method* section of this book), is valuable for learners developing their writing skills. This technique encourages learners to be responsible for their own learning (e.g. checking their own mistakes before the teacher does). It removes pressure from writers who are hampered in their writing because they think they must write without mistakes from the very start. It also means that learners can work on their writing until they have a final draft that is correct and available for others to see. This is far more motivating than handing up a piece of work for the teacher to mark and hand back.

(For examples, see Allen and Valette 1972, Hamilton 1984, and Jolly 1984.)

Focus and shaping exercises

The number of exercises which relate to the practice of language items, skills, or strategies are many, and language teachers are generally very familiar with creating them. They include:

- gap filling exercises
- cloze exercises
- crazy sentences
- sentence completion
- games (e.g. scrabble, happy families, etc.)
- dictation
- spelling
- matching words to pictures, captions to pictures, two halves of a sentence
- yes/no or true/false exercises
- multiple choice exercises
- pattern practice
- word building (e.g. constructing words from common roots)
- vocabulary expansion (e.g. synonyms, antonyms, meanings of words)
- crosswords/cryptic puzzles
- jumbled words/jumbled sentences

When selecting and creating resources for focus and shaping exercises, teachers should bear in mind that it is preferable to place language forms and resources in a context which will assist learners to discover the patterns and rules of language for themselves.

The teaching of *pronunciation* has traditionally been a phonetic-based approach (i.e. teaching individual sounds, often in isolation, and in words unrelated to any context). Teaching isolated forms of sounds and words in this way fails to address the fact that in language use, many aspects of pronunciation are determined by the positioning of individual language elements within long stretches of speech. Pronunciation is therefore best taught as an integral part of oral language use, not merely as an aspect of the oral production of words and sentences (Pennington and Richards 1986). Pronunciation is best taught using global techniques, working on stress, intonation, rhythm, timing and pausing, and using language in context.

(For examples, see Allen and Valette 1972, Rinvolucri 1984, and Rivers and Temperley 1978.)

Integration of activities

A number of devices can be used to integrate activities so that learners see an individual activity as part of a whole, and are able to link together the language experiences that they have undergone, and the knowledge, skills, and strategies that they have developed (see *An Overview of Syllabus Development* in Book 2). Examples of such devices include:

- a theme or topic
- a skill
- a genre
- a project (e.g. the production of a class newspaper)
- a particular language purpose (e.g. entertaining)
- a resource (e.g. a literary text)
- a topic from another curriculum area
- a combination of any of the above.

Resources need to be carefully selected and/or created to allow for such integration. (For examples, see Mathews and Read 1982.)

Conclusion

In the above description of resources and activities, the focus has been on the achievement of the central goal of language learning, namely, communication. In the pursuit of this goal, it is expected that the other goals will also be met. For example, while reading a newspaper in the target language, learners might at the same time be developing skills concerned with locating information. They might also be developing cognitive processing skills related to synthesising information. If they are doing this in a group, they are almost certainly learning social skills related to cooperation with other people.

Resources can also provide very convenient means for the achievement of the sociocultural goals, if they focus on information about or experiences of the target country and its people. Resources and activities which provide first-hand experiences of the target language community and its culture (e.g. visitors from, and visits to the target language community) are of most value. Letters and tapes from penfriends, films, videos, slides, photographs, and 'authentic documents' (menus, magazines, tourist brochures, songs, poems, books, tapes, etc.) are also valuable sources of sociocultural data. These can be supplemented with reference books, slides, videos, and films which contain up-to-date information about the target culture in English. Resources which bring the target language community into the classroom, and activities which take the learners into the target language community, have the greatest potential to assist with the achievement of the sociocultural goals.

Resources for Whole Class, Group, and Individual Learning

Resources for whole class learning

Resources for whole class learning should allow for individual differences in learners' ability, and for all learners to be actively involved in the learning process. Examples of such resources include:

textbooks (see *Textbooks as Resources*, the next section in this book)
activity-sheets (commerical or teacher-prepared)
films
videos
overhead projector and transparencies
class sets of books (e.g. grammar books, reference books, readers)
blackboard/whiteboard
audiotapes
large pictures
magazines and newspapers

Resources for group and pairwork

Criteria for selecting resources for groups will depend to some degree on the type of group and the reason for its formation. The following questions relate to the criteria for the selection of resources for group work (not all criteria need apply to a single resource):

- Does the resource provide clear directions to enable learners to complete the task? Can the directions be referred to if forgotten?
- Are the group members assigned specific tasks? Are the roles of individuals in the group clearly specified?
- Is there a challenge in the task for all learners?
- Does the resource provide a purposeful context for problem solving, exchanging information, and other cognitive processes involved?
- Is there an information, opinion, or affective gap to promote communicative use of the target language?
- Is there a result required from the group (e.g. items to be ticked off, listed, sketched, tape-recorded)? Is a conclusion to be presented for the teacher and the rest of the class?
- Is there provision for learners to evaluate the task?

Examples of such resources include:

problem solving activities
information/opinion/affective gap activities
unfinished plays or stories
cassette recorders and audiotapes
listening posts
overhead projectors and transparencies
video recorders and videotapes
video cameras

(For examples, see Hamilton and Wheeldon 1985, Rinvolucri 1984, and Walter 1980.)

Resources for Individual work

The following questions relate to criteria for the selection of resources for individual work (not all criteria need apply to a single resource):

- Can the resource be organised in a self-access centre, and be graded and marked in an appropriate way for easy access by individual learners?
- Does the resource assist learners to assess their own needs, to plan their own learning program, and to assess their own progress?
- Does the resource have a self-correction facility (e.g. an answer key)?
- Are the objectives of each activity or unit of work clear to learners?
- Are there clear instructions for the activities that learners are required to perform?

Examples of resources for individual work:

self-access activity cards and sheets
reading materials in the target language (comic books, newspapers, magazines, postcards, etc.)
reading materials about the target culture
dictionaries
creative writing ideas, including unfinished stories, photographs, interesting topics, letters to respond to
examples of various kinds of writing
lists of colloquial and slang expressions
pronunciation and reading aloud exercises
pairwork activities
simple dictations on tape
texts from published sources with accompanying work cards (e.g. gap filling, matching, yes/no, multiple choice, or one word answers)
cards referring learners to a text or reading excercise in a published source
flash cards of various sorts
scrabble and other board games
workbooks
puppets
crosswords
jokes
a typewriter
a language master
a telephone
a listening post
a prop box
recorded drills
cassette recorder and blank tapes
songs
poems
video recordings
recordings of talks on various topics

Textbooks as Resources

The following questions need to be considered when textbooks are chosen:

- Is the textbook appropriate for:
  - — the target group, considering the Stage at which they will be working, their language development, interests, etc?
  - — the purpose for which it is to be used?
  - — the needs and preferences of the teacher?
  - — other practicalities and general considerations?
- Does the textbook allow for meaningful, purposeful, and individual use of the target language?
- Does the textbook cover the five goals (communication, sociocultural, learning-how-to-learn, language and cultural awareness, and general knowledge)? What are the gaps? What imbalance (if any) will need to be redressed for the particular learning group?
- Does it contain a combination of activities and exercises?
- Do the activities involve combinations of reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills for language use (i.e. does it have a global approach to language learning)?
- What will the learners think of the textbook? Will they find it easy to follow, helpful, boring? Does it cover what they want to learn?
- Does the textbook allow for individualisation?
- Does it present information in such a way that learners are able to work independently with it?
- Does the textbook deal with the learning needs of the particular learning group? What will be needed to supplement the textbook in this regard? Is supplementation feasible?
- Does the textbook allow for flexible use?

The adaptation of textbooks

By the very nature of their being a 'completed package' prepared outside the specific teaching/learning context in which they will be used, all textbooks will need some adaptation to make them suitable for the specific conditions pertaining to a particular language learning context.

Adaptation of textbooks is best done by establishing clear goals and objectives, both long-term and short-term, related to the particular learning group. (Suggested programming techniques are provided in Book 2.)

Having established a clear statement of goals and objectives in long-term program planning as well as in short-term units of work, teachers are able to cross reference their textbook with the goals of the program. This process will allow them to identify any gaps which might exist in their textbook. These may be filled by using other textbooks, source books of activities, and teacher-developed materials. It will inevitably be necessary for teachers to adapt the textbook to their specific learner group (and not vice versa) in order to respond to such factors as:

- the variability of learners' progress
- the range of learners' interests
- learner-negotiated content
- teacher-directed content based on the five goals
- the incorporation of unexpected events into the learning program (e.g. a visit from a background-speaker, a language camp, a batch of letters from penfriends in the target country, a party with another class learning the target language, etc.).

The Grading of Resources

A resource can be graded by examining its content, and by considering the way in which it will be used.

The activities and exercises which learners undertake at any Stage must always be appropriate to their level of proficiency (see the section on *Guidelines for grading syllabus content through activities*, Book 2).

The content of the resource

Learners find activities easier when the following factors pertaining to the content of a resource apply:

- *predictability:* the language used is predictable (e.g. commonly used phrases, repetition of phrases and vocabulary, etc.)
- *experiential knowledge:* the language used and the information provided are related to experiences that the learner recognises easily
- *sociocultural specificity:* the language used is not particularly specific to the sociocultural group
- *level of support:* the spoken or written text provides contextual clues to enable learners to use prediction skills in listening or reading, e.g.
  — when the speaker uses appropriate body language and facial expressions
  — when a written text is supported by illustrations
  — when a written text contains a degree of predictability in the story-line or in its logical development
- *level of cognitive processing:* the spoken or written text is easy for learners to process linguistically (e.g. contains few subordinate clauses or embeddings)
- *level of cognitive demand:* the resource does not place too much cognitive demand on learners (i.e the spoken or written text is easy for them to follow conceptually).

The use of the resource

The following grading criteria relate to the manner in which a particular resource is to be employed. Learners find activities are easier when they:

- can bring personal experience to bear to solve a problem
- can refer to concrete rather than abstract things
- can rely on support when solving a problem (e.g. when a sympathetic interlocutor is there to help, when a dictionary or glossary is available, or when questions are so phrased as to assist learners to find answers to them, etc.)
- are aware of the objectives of the activity, and have been involved in some negotiation of the objectives
- can take short rather than long turns in conversation
- can talk or write to a familiar and sympathetic individual or group
- can talk or write about topics with which they are familiar and which are well organised in their memory
- have an opportunity to preview the language and ideas contained in the text.

(after Brown and Yule 1983)

Grading related to the resource itself

The following general grading criteria relate to the nature of the resource itself. Learners find activities easier when:

- the resource is suited to their age, interests, and level of maturity
- the resource is attractive and well-presented
- any directions associated with the use of resource are easy to follow.

Conclusion

Resources are a focal point of the curriculum because they play an important part in achieving goals and objectives. Issues relating to syllabus content, teaching method, assessment, and evaluation will also influence and be influenced by the choice of resources and the way that they are employed in the classroom.

The contingencies of language teaching/learning almost invariably place demands on teachers to create resources to supplement their teaching programs. Many languages do not have textbooks for teachers and learners to use. Some languages do not have many language-specific resources available at all, either in the form of authentic documents or pedagogically-inspired resources.

Resources can be created for a variety of purposes and can focus on the language itself, on certain cultural aspects of the target language community, or on subject matter which the learners are studying through the medium of the target language.

To alleviate the problems caused by the time constraints under which all teachers operate, it is suggested that teachers within a school or within a region come together to support each other in the selection, creation, and adaptation of resources. Colleagues teaching the same or different languages in a school can also help each other by sharing resources, and by applying together the criteria and principles outlined above to the gradual building up of a useful and principled collection of resource materials.

Assessment

The Context for Developing Assessment Procedures

A definition of assessment

Assessment involves making considered judgements about learners' performance. It is a dynamic process and is concerned with determing how satisfactorily learners have achieved the objectives of a particular course or unit of work. Assessment has the educational function of describing the performance and promoting the development of the learner, while, at the same time, meeting the needs of the school, the educational system, and society at large (parents, employers, and the wider community) to know the outcomes of a particular learning program.

Assessment should not just be 'added-on' at the end of a learning sequence. It should not be viewed as something external to the learning process, but as an integral part of the learner-centred curriculum.

Directions in assessment

Assessment in languages needs to be considered in the wider context of changing emphases in assessment practices generally. Traditional methods of assessment tend to emphasise knowledge of specific content and memorisation. Learning is reported in the form of a single mark or grade which is derived from tests and/or projects completed within a specified period of time, and the performance of the individual learner is judged in relation to the performances of other learners in the same class. The responsibility for assessment rests with the teacher, and all learners are assessed in the same way and at the same time. Different rates and styles of learning are not considered.

There is currently a move away from this style of assessment, towards one which emphasises the application of knowledge, as well as the knowledge itself. Learning is described in the form of a profile of performance, and each learner is required to demonstrate what he/she knows and can do. Individual strengths and weaknesses are identified, and suggestions are made by which improvement can occur. Learners are given an active role and responsibility in the assessment process by being encouraged to assess their own performance. This form of assessment encourages communication and cooperation, as well as competition.

Many of the characteristics referred to above are features of *criterion-referenced assessment*, where learners' performance is judged in relation to specified criteria. The aim of criterion-referenced assessment is to ascertain whether learners are able to carry out specific tasks, rather than to compare their performance with that of other learners, or with standards or norms which have been set elsewhere.

Directions in assessment in languages

Changes in assessment in languages have taken place together with changes in our understanding of what language is and how it is learned, and changes in approaches to language teaching. With the grammar/translation approach to language teaching and learning, for example, assessment mostly involved tests of discrete items of grammatical knowledge and translation. The same assessment procedures prevailed when audiovisual and audiolingual approaches were adopted. Because it was believed that learners learned patterns through stimulus-response habit formation, testing focused on discrete linguistic patterns. The communicative approach, with its emphasis on purposeful language use, has resulted in a move towards communicative assessment.

Communicative assessment involves the assessment of learners' language on the basis of how well they carry out activities (see Book 2, *The activities-based syllabus* for a definition of an 'activity'). It represents a holistic approach to language testing, and focuses on language as it is used in communication, rather than on the discrete components of language. (See Book 1 *Developments in Approaches to Language Teaching and Learning* for further reading on assessment in relation to curriculum design.)

The concept of proficiency

Underlying the different approaches to assessment described above, is a changing understanding of the concept of proficiency. With the grammar/translation approach to language teaching and learning, for example, the term 'proficiency' is understood to mean knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary of the target language. Knowledge of specific language items, however, does not mean that an individual is able to apply that knowledge readily in communication.

Proficiency involves, rather, the ability to carry out communication activities within a sociocultural context. Ingram (in Hyltenstam and Pienemann 1985) emphasises that proficiency also needs to be defined in terms of how such activities are carried out. The definition of proficiency, therefore, needs to be extended to include a description of language behaviour in terms of such features as the range of situations in which the learner can operate, as well as in terms of syntax, lexis, discourse, pronunciation, register, and sensitivity to cultural factors.

Rea (in Lee, et al. 1985) discusses the distinction between proficiency and knowledge as the difference between two kinds of performance which she describes as *non-communicative* and *communicative* performance, the former referring to the ability to manipulate language forms, the latter referring to the ability to relate forms to meaning in language use. This distinction is a useful one, since, though the emphasis is on assessment of communicative performance, there still remains a place for assessing discrete items of language knowledge, skills, and other elements in the communication process. In practical terms, the achievement of an appropriate balance between the two for the particular Stage of language learning is what is significant in establishing an appropriate assessment scheme (see the section in this book on *General criteria for judging performance in activity-types* for further discussion of proficiency).

The Purposes and Content of Assessment

Purposes of assessment

The purposes of assessment are closely related to both the goals towards which learners are aiming and the teaching and learning process. They can be described as follows:

- *To motivate learners and teachers:* i.e. to encourage learners to make progress by providing appropriate and attainable objectives at each Stage. Evidence and recognition of this progress is an important motivating factor and an incentive to further learning. Achievement is itself a motivation to further achievement. Similarly, teachers feel job satisfaction when they know that learners are making progress.
- *To inform the teaching and learning process, and to guide future curriculum planning:* i.e. to help the learners and the teacher to know where the learners' strengths and weaknesses lie, so that they can take action to remedy weaknesses and build on strengths.
- *To inform other relevant people:* i.e. to provide information of a useful kind to relevant people outside the classroom such as student counsellors, parents, employers, and the wider community. The school is accountable to society, and has a responsibility to provide information about the outcomes of a learning program and to respond to society's expectations of that program.
- *To encourage cooperative styles of work:* i.e. to encourage learners to work together cooperatively, through helping each other in peer-assessment.
- *To encourage responsibility and involvement:* i.e. to encourage learners to be involved in the learning/assessment process, to take some responsibility for their own learning, and to learn to evaluate their own efforts, so that they can make informed decisions about future courses of action in the light of their own aspirations.

(after Clark 1987)

Assessment in language courses may be both formative and summative. The term *formative assessment* refers to the continuous assessment of the learning process throughout the course. Its purpose is to determine how the learner is progressing towards certain goals and objectives. *Summative assessment* refers to end of course attainment. In considering course attainment, it may well be that information is required regarding the extent to which the learner has internalised the content of the particular course, but it may also be necessary to provide an indication of the proficiency of the learner in the target language at a particular Stage of language learning.

Content of assessment

Assessment in languages involves the assessment of language performance based on the communication activities which are central to classroom learning (see Book 2, *Syllabus Organisation and Content*). All five goals of language learning (communication, sociocultural, learning-how-to-learn, language and cultural awareness, and general knowledge) are interrelated. However, assessment occurs and is described through the communication goals, which represent the central goals for learning and for language use. It is through the communication goals that the other four goals are realised.

In assessment in languages it is insufficient to consider only achievement of certain specified objectives. Communication activities can be carried out in a variety of ways, drawing upon different language forms, skills, strategies, and general knowledge. The fact that learners have mastered particular language components does not necessarily mean that they can use them in communicative performance. Learners need to internalise a communicative capacity which will enable them to perform a

range of activities. There can be a risk in languages assessment of concentrating more on the component parts of an activity than on the activity itself; this may result in an assessment weighted towards *knowledge* of language forms or other elements, rather than *use* of language.

This is not to say, however, that there is no place for the assessment of specific language forms, skills, strategies, or general knowledge as described in exercises. Specific information of this kind is necessary for planning further language learning experiences and for responding to learners individual strengths and weaknesses.

The content described in syllabuses based on the *ALL Guidelines* is designed to contribute to the development of proficiency in the target language. Such syllabuses describe the goals, objectives, activities, contexts, roles, relationships, functions, notions, and other elements which are considered appropriate at each Stage (see Book 2, *Appendix 2*). It is intended that through the suggested activities learners develop their proficiency or capacity to use the language creatively in an increasing range of contexts, rather than being limited to the manipulation of forms in specified situations. Thus, it is necessary to monitor learners' progress through the various activities which lead to the goals, as well as to assess specifically performance in relation to the communication goals outlined for each Stage. An assessment scheme should include assessment based on specified course content in order to determine whether learners are learning what they are being taught. It should also cater for assessment of *proficiency*, which is broader, and concerned with determining whether learners can carry out the range of activity-types set as communication goals in non-rehearsed situations.

Since the emphasis in the *ALL Guidelines* is on learning through activities and on assisting learners to use language and to learn how to learn, the processes of learning and communication are as important as the content and products of that learning. The term 'process' refers to the acquisition of language, i.e. what the learner internalises, based on the communicative data provided by the teacher, how certain skills are being learned, and the process of communication itself. Through assessment weaknesses in communication are noted and action is then taken to remedy those weaknesses through concentrating in exercises on specific forms, skills, or strategies.

The specified goals and objectives, related to the objective needs of learners, and described to them in explicit terms, provide both teachers and learners with a sense of direction. Objectives related to the subjective needs of learners, and developed through the process of negotiation, allow the teacher to accommodate the different and changing needs and interests of individual learners, so that the program remains learner-centred. An assessment scheme should allow for the inclusion of such negotiated objectives and activities.

A total assessment scheme needs to include:

- specified activities (based on the activity-types)
- various components (i.e. forms, skills, strategies, and general knowledge)
- negotiated activities (based on the activity-types)
- individually tailored components (i.e. forms, skills, strategies and general knowledge).

Methods of Assessment

There are many different types of assessment instruments. The type of instrument selected will depend on the purpose for which it is to be used, the intended audience, and what is to be assessed.

Assessment instruments which promote confidence and a sense of success for the individual are most desirable. Success can be promoted by determining realistic, achievable targets for learners. Teachers organise the goals, objectives and activities for each Stage into manageable units of work. Goals and objectives should be described as clearly as possible and made explicit to the learners. Throughout the learning process, learners' performance is assessed in relation to the goals and objectives.

Formative assessment

Several means of assessment (ranging from the formal to the informal) can be used for the purpose of informing the teaching and learning process, and guiding future curriculum planning. These means constitute part of formative assessment which diagnoses learning, so that action can be taken where necessary to promote further language development. Diagnosis may provide information on the presence or absence of particular forms, skills, strategies or general knowledge. It may also assist teachers in determining the causes of learning difficulties, and in grouping learners according to their needs at any particular time.

Mechanisms are needed which assist the teacher and learners to monitor both the process and products of learning. It is necessary to monitor:

- whether learners are learning what they are being taught, and are able to use language and other skills and strategies in activities at a level commensurate with their aspirations, achievements, and apparent potential
- the process by which learners are learning, including their response to specific activities and their attitude to language learning generally
- the outcomes of learners' self-directed assignments.

The following are useful methods of formative assessment:

Observation of learners' achievement (in both activities and exercises) is one mechanism which can be used to determine future action. It can be carried out by teachers and/or learners. Checklists or scales may be used to guide observation and to assist in recording the information gained. For example, in observing a group discussion activity, it may be useful for the teacher to record comments on the process of taking turns, in order to ascertain the degree of involvement of different individuals and to assist all learners to be involved as much as possible.

Some teachers record observations as notes in a diary, or as a case study, or by keeping a folder where they record learners' progress and difficulties. Table 3 provides a possible framework for more formal observation.

Table 3: Record of progress

Name ..... **Class** .....

Activity:	**Date**	**Comment**
e.g. conversation		
giving information		
problem solving, etc.		

Language forms, skills, strategies, general knowledge, etc.	**Date**	**Comment**
e.g. vocabulary		
structures		
listening		
summarising, etc.		

Classroom involvement:	limited	satisfactory	good	excellent
e.g. whole class activities				
group work				
pairwork, etc.				

Informal interaction with learners is another technique which can be used to find out their attitude towards a particular activity, their areas of need, what kind of assistance they require, which aspects of a unit of work they enjoyed, or how they went about carrying out a particular activity. This interaction can also be carried out more formally through questionnaires (in the target language, where possible).

For example:

Table 4: Student questionnaire

Name ..... **Class** .....

Did you enjoy this unit? not at all a great deal

What did you find interesting/boring?

What did you find difficult?

What helped you learn best in this unit?

Tick the way you learn best:
- by doing exercises
- by listening to the teacher's explanations
- by seeing things written down in a table
- by looking things up in the book
- by listening and repeating
- by practising with a partner
- by working individually
- any other ways e.g. .....

(Note: these suggestions can be made specific to relate to a particular activity or unit of work).

Learners' performance can also be assessed formatively on the basis of *classwork and homework*. Learners should know the criteria for assessment before beginning the task, and the teacher's response should be based on the criteria. *Folios of work* and *audiotapes* can be used to provide a record of progress.

More formal *end of unit tests* can be used to diagnose the strengths and weaknesses of individual learners and to incorporate the information gained into decisions about future teaching and learning. The full range of tests from discrete point/indirect tests to semi-direct and direct tests may be used as end of unit tests for diagnostic purposes. Each type of test will diagnose different components of communication and provide different kinds of information to inform the teaching/learning process. A description of each kind of test follows:

- *Discrete point tests* are atomistic tests which focus on the components of proficiency. For example, they may test particular items of phonology, syntax, or lexis, or aspects of functions, or discourse. They may also be designed to test particular skills, strategies, or items of general knowledge. The advantage of such tests, particularly for diagnosis, lies in the fact that one aspect is tested at a time, without interference from any other factor. They are seen as being objective, generally with a single right answer, and therefore easy to mark. The disadvantage remains, however, that they involve a mechanical use of language which is largely decontextualised. They focus on form rather than on meaning. They are considered to be indirect tests since they assess discrete items of knowledge in order to say something about the ability to communicate. The correlation between the two is not always high.
- *Semi-direct tests* go beyond the discrete point tests in that they assess contextualised language behaviour. Yet, like discrete point tests, they are often used to rank learners and to assign proficiency grades. The most common examples of semi-direct language tests are cloze tests and dictation. In cloze tests the teacher might delete every sixth word in a passage. Or alternatively, the words being focused upon might be deleted (e.g. articles or verbs, etc.). The learner is required to fill the gaps, generally using the context to provide a suitable item. Similarly, in dictation, learners rely on the context of the passage in order to be able to reproduce what they hear. Semi-direct tests are seen as being objective and easy to construct, administer, and mark. In addition, they appear to have a close correlation with proficiency. Yet, despite this, it is difficult to know from the results of semi-direct tests what learners are actually able to do in the target language. Such tests remain a useful means for the diagnosis of strengths and weaknesses in terms of vocabulary and discourse, as well as other specific focuses.
- *Direct tests* are holistic tests which focus on learners' ability to carry out activities. They are designed to determine learners' proficiency in the language, frequently on the basis of a scale of levels of proficiency (e.g. the Australian Second Language Proficiency Rating (ASLPR), and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) scales). Assessment often involves an interview which is designed to elicit language behaviour and enable the rater to determine an appropriate rating. It should be noted that with the ASLPR, the 'interview' includes all four macroskills (Ingram and Wylie 1982). These tests are frequently criticised as being subjective. However, it is important to remember that in all language testing, there is likely to be an element of subjectivity because of the complexity of language itself. Teachers also indicate that such direct tests do not discriminate sufficiently among learners, and that the descriptions of the proficiency ratings do not adequately cover the complexity of language. Another disadvantage of direct tests is that they are time consuming. If the purpose is to diagnose the capacity of learners to use the language, however, a direct test needs to be used in spite of practical difficulties.

Providing the learner with appropriate feedback on tests is essential (see *Principle 7* in Book 1). Teachers should be sensitive to the different needs and learning abilities of their learners when providing this feedback.

A factor which can contribute to a feeling of confidence and success in learners is the chance to redeem their performance on a particular assessment activity. Learners need to be encouraged to try again if they have not completed an assessment activity successfully.

Summative assessment

End of Stage tests

For learners, evidence of progess and recognition of this by others can be an important motivating factor and an incentive to further learning. End of Stage tests should be taken when learners feel ready for them, and when they are likely to be successful, so that they are motivated to continue to the next Stage. It is recognised that there are practical considerations which make it difficult to implement individualised assessment for all classes all the time. Nevertheless, it remains an ideal towards which teachers should aim, within the practical constraints of their specific teaching conditions.

It might be feasible for end of Stage tests to be designed for use by a cluster of schools or a region, thereby creating a mechanism whereby learners receive official recognition of their achievement through certification of progress from a regional educational authority.

It is proposed that through the *National Assessment Framework for Languages at Senior Secondary Level* (Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia 1987) the assessment authorities in each state/territory could provide assessment and credentialling for senior secondary Stages 3, 4, and 5 of the ALL Project's Framework of Stages. The remaining Stages could be catered for at a regional level. Such a mechanism has proved to be most successful in the UK graded objectives schemes, and in the district groupings and moderation panels in the Queensland Secondary Schools assessment scheme. The proposal would have the desirable result of encouraging teachers to come together to reach an agreement about the level of proficiency that should be aimed for at a particular Stage (not that all schools would need to follow the same path to reach that particular level). If such regional schemes are not feasible in the context of a particular state/territory it might be possible to achieve similar benefits through central education authorities. It is hoped that the *ALL Guidelines* will assist teachers to work together to create their own regional, local, or school end of Stage tests.

End of Stage tests should constitute only one component of a total assessment scheme which would lead to regional or state/territory accreditation. It would be undesirable to give such tests so much prominence that they lead to a distortion of the classroom teaching/learning process, as happens when teachers give undue emphasis to the preparation of learners for such (external) tests.

Involving learners in the assessment process

Assessment should provide learners with information which will assist them to make decisions about their own learning. Learners need to be encouraged to participate actively in the assessment process, so that they can share the responsibility with their teacher for the assessment of their own performance.

Learners can assume responsibility for their learning in several different ways. They need to feel that they are involved in helping to determine goals, objectives, learning experiences, and assessment procedures. With regard to assessment, they should be able to clarify with their teacher the criteria associated with the successful completion of activities. They need to be provided with explicit information about the nature of the assessment activity, the purposes for which the assessment is taking place, the reasons for the selection of a particular assessment procedure, what is expected of them, and how success will be determined.

Assessment instruments such as *progress cards* are a useful device for encouraging learner responsibility and involvement, particularly in the earlier Stages of language learning. These were one of the most successful innovations of the Graded Objectives in Modern Languages (GOML) movement in the UK in the late seventies. Table 5 provides an example of such a card. The items outlined on the progress card are closely linked to the objectives specified in a particular activity or unit of work, so that learners have a record of their ongoing progress.

Self-assessment

Learners can be encouraged to evaluate their own achievements. If they are involved in their own learning and assessment, they are able to gain a clearer understanding of their own goals, expectations, and achievements.

Learners should be encouraged to become self-critical. They can learn a great deal by becoming aware of their difficulties and identifying areas of need. They can be asked to complete questionnaires in which they describe and assess their own learning. They can also be encouraged to keep a record or a diary describing the activities that they have undertaken in the classroom or in real-life situations with speakers of the target language (where possible). An example of a student self-evaluation sheet is provided in Table 6.

Table 5: Progress card

Name ..... Class		
Topic: Food and drink **I can: . . .** Unit objectives are listed in this column. They may include: language development objectives skills development objectives sociocultural objectives general knowledge objectives negotiated objectives, etc. Examples: **I can . . .** • express likes and dislikes about foods • describe my favourite food • choose a meal from a menu • find out the preferences of my friends regarding food • draw a table to show my friends' preferences regarding food etc. • negotiated activities	**Checked by me**	**Checked by my teacher**

Table 6: Self-evaluation sheet

Name: ..... **Class:** .....

Activity:

What I learned:

Problems I encountered:

How I can solve the problems:

Other pro formas can be devised which encourage learners, through self-assessment, to focus on specific features such as language elements (vocabulary, pronunciation, spelling, syntax) skills, strategies, items of general knowledge and so on.

Use of self-access/self-checking materials

Many of the learning resources that learners use can include self-checking mechanisms, e.g. learners can read, listen to or view materials, answer questions, complete information grids, and use self-checking answer sheets. These are useful mechanisms for encouraging individual learners to take responsibility for their own learning, and for providing them with immediate feedback on performance. Results can be recorded by learners on a special form which they keep in their workbook or folder. The teacher checks this periodically.

Folios of work

Learners can be encouraged to keep folders of written work as well as cassettes of oral work, so that they have a visible/audible record of work completed. Such folios can be used to help learners see the progress that they have made, and motivate them in further learning. The folders may also contain records of learning-how-to-learn experiences (perhaps related to a checklist).

Peer assessment

Other learners (as well as the teacher) can act as critical friends and support their classmates by assessing and giving feedback on the quality of their performance, in order to help them work towards improvement.

Informal peer assessment activities during pairwork and group work can encourage cooperative styles of work, where learners learn to work together towards solutions, as well as working in healthy competition with one another.

Learners can be encouraged to monitor each other's performance through group sessions where they have the opportunity of learning from each other. Prior to such sessions, the learners and the teacher will need to discuss the criteria for assessment. This technique is appropriate following the completion of longer pieces of writing or a project of some kind. The technique also assists learners in developing their own monitoring capacities.

All the mechanisms to encourage learner responsibility and involvement which have been described above can be used by learners at all Stages of language learning. They all need to be introduced and explained to learners, so that they can gain the skills and confidence which are needed to be able to assess their own learning and performance as well as that of their peers. Learners will need practice in using these devices so that they gradually come to understand their purpose and learn to use them effectively. Video and audio recordings of learners engaged in activities may assist learners in understanding more about the processes involved in communication, subsequently increasing their ability to make judgements about effective performance, and apply this knowledge to their own performance.

Reporting on learners' performance

Assessment of language proficiency is of interest not only in an educational sense but also in a practical, 'real-world' sense (for vocational, legal, or social purposes, for example).

The information gained from assessment processes is useful to a range of people: the learners and their teacher as well as counsellors, careers advisers, parents, tertiary admissions officers, employers, and the wider community. It is important to remember that it is necessary to report to parents and the wider community in terms which are meaningful to them.

It may be necessary for teachers to explain new reporting procedures to parents who may not necessarily be aware of recent developments in languages education.

A *profile* which allows for reporting on a learner's performance in a range of activities can provide those who use the report with a clear indication of the learner's capabilities in the different dimensions of language use. This form of reporting is preferable to one providing a single mark or grade which aggregates performance in the various dimensions of language use and condenses the learner's ability to perform a variety of tasks into a single numerical rating or grade.

What is the best way to draw up such a profile of performance? Since assessment is based on learners' ability to carry out certain activities using language, it is suggested that the most appropriate way to report on progress is to use the dimensions of language use and activity-types as used for the organisation of syllabus content (see

Book 2, *Syllabus Organisation and Content*). In this way, learners' performance is described in terms of performance in broad activities involving combinations of macro-skills rather than in terms of discrete skills. This is considered to be more reflective of real-life use of language. Table 7 provides an example of such a profile.

It is likely that learners will vary in their ability to carry out different activities within the activity-types. For example, a learner might not perform as well in activities involving acquiring and recording information as in those involving interpersonal relations, or vice versa. Individual learners operate from variable language resources and variable levels of skills, depending on such factors as the nature of the activity itself, their experience of that activity, and the thematic content involved. The profile suggested would be capable of indicating a variation in performance within different activity-types, and it is considered that such information would be useful to the learners themselves, as well as parents, employers, and the wider community.

In reporting on learners' performance, schools often require that a single, norm-referenced, global grade be awarded. In this case, it is necessary to establish how the various assessment activities contribute to the learner's overall grade. Teachers might wish to give different assessment activities a different weighting in the overall assessment. For example, at Stage 1, it might be considered appropriate to give a greater weighting to activities involving the interpersonal use of language than to activities which involve searching for information, or personal expression. Since not all assessment activities employ the same assessment criteria, it is likely that various kinds of assessment activities will contribute differently to an overall grade. Though achievement in the different components of the learner's language resource might be included in the overall assessment, the balance will favour performance in activities.

The review of learners' achievements at the end of a Stage is of major importance.

The appropriate weightings established across activity-types and the relative weighting of continuous assessment as opposed to end of Stage assessment, will differ at different Stages of language learning. When considering the educational needs of the learner, and the requirements of the school, the educational system, and society at large, it is the teacher who is best placed to determine the weighting which is most appropriate for a particular learning group in a particular language. A regional moderation procedure also constitutes a useful mechanism to achieve consensus.

Descriptive reporting is another way of providing valuable information about learners' performance. Such descriptions may be the sole method of reporting, or they may be provided in addition to summary descriptions or grades. The specific criteria for assessing performance in each activity-type, and the characteristics of performance at the end of each Stage (see *Judging Performance in Activities*) provide useful data for this kind of reporting, particularly when the language of the report is easily understood by parents and the learners themselves.

The reporting system used for languages in a particular school will need to be consistent with the assessment policies and practices of that school. Language teachers need to devise a reporting scheme which provides the descriptive information that they wish to include, and which, at the same time, is consistent with the assessment policies and practices of their particular school.

A less formal yet no less valuable way of reporting to parents on the progress of a class, is by means of occasional newsletters which describe the language learning program in general, the area being worked on at any particular time, an outline of specific objectives, and suggestions as to how parents can become involved in their child's language learning.

A similar profile for the teacher's own monitoring purposes can be devised to record information about learners' strengths and weaknesses in various components which underly the overall performance in activities. By means of such a profile, teachers can monitor progress in such areas as language development (e.g. phonological, vocabulary, and grammatical development), skills development in terms of both cognitive processing skills (e.g. processing information, making hypotheses) and learning-how-to-learn skills (e.g. social interaction skills, specific listening skills, specific reading skills), the development of communication strategies (e.g. paraphrase, repetition), and the understanding of sociocultural aspects. An example of such a profile appears in Table 8.

Table 7: Profile of performance

Name: ..... Class/Stage:		
Language use	**Description of Performance**	**Grade, or summary description (if necessary)**
Interpersonal Use of Language: • establishing and maintaining relationships, and discussing topics of interest • participating in social interaction related to solving problems, making decisions, and transacting to obtain goods and services		unsatis satis gd ex unsatis satis gd ex
Informational Use of Language: • obtaining information, processing, and using it • Giving information in spoken or written form		unsatis satis gd ex unsatis satis gd ex
'Aesthetic' Use of Language: • Listening to, reading or viewing, and responding personally to a stimulus • Personal expression		unsatis satis gd ex unsatis satis gd ex
Additional comments:		

A descriptive comment and/or grade (if necessary) is provided in column 3. The terminology used in Table 7 might need to be revised when describing the performance of younger learners.

Table 8: Class achievement profile

Class: ..... Unit Title: ..... Date:				
Learners' names	Language development	Skills development	Development of communication strategies	Sociocultural aspects
	e.g. phonology, vocabulary, grammar	e.g. cognitive processing skills, learning-how-to-learn skills	e.g. asking for repetition, paraphrase	e.g. sociocultural contexts, roles, and relation-ships; sociocultural data

Teachers might not wish to include all the above categories for all units. The decision about which categories to include would be based the particular focus of the unit of work in question.

Planning an assessment scheme

Because language is multi-dimensional, teachers need to assess performance not only in communication activities but also in a number of different components such as forms, skills, strategies, and general knowledge.

It is impossible to assess everything that a learner does. In planning an assessment scheme, therefore, it is necessary to be selective. The following steps are designed to assist teachers in making appropriate selections:

1. Examine the unit of work:
   - What are the major objectives of the unit?
   - What activities and exercises are learners required to undertake to complete the unit?
   - Which activities and exercises might be suitable for assessment purposes?
   - Do the objectives, activities, exercises, and assessment procedures form a balanced whole?

2. Examine the assessment possibilities:
   - Are the assessment procedures appropriate to the purpose(s) of assessment?

3. Consider the overall goals of the Stage:
   - How does the assessment scheme for this unit relate to assessment of previous units?
   - Is there continuity, and an appropriate balance between assessment of activities, and components such as forms, skills, strategies, and general knowledge? Does the assessment scheme include both formative and summative forms of assessment over a range of assessment activities?
   - Are the assessment procedures for this unit consistent with the overall goals of the Stage?

4. Discuss the proposed assessment scheme with learners so that they understand what will be assessed and by what means.

These steps can assist teachers to decide what it is approprate to assess, and how the assessment should be carried out. Over time, teachers can ensure that they are assessing a range of language use through the activity-types for a range of purposes using appropriate mechanisms. Having planned the assessment process, the teacher is in a better position to describe to the learners what will be assessed, as well as the criteria which will be applied in judging performance.

Teachers may find the example in Table 9 a useful means of describing to learners the nature of the assessment activity, the conditions under which it will be carried out, and the criteria which will be used to judge performance. After the assessment activity has been completed, the teacher enters a description of the learner's performance, and/or a grade and comments. Finally, the learner is encouraged to comment on his/her own performance.

Conclusion

Teachers need to adopt a balanced perspective on the nature and purposes of assessment, so that they do not spend valuable teaching/learning time engaged in assessment activities to the exclusion of other learning activities. They also need to ensure that the assessment methods that they adopt are the most appropriate for the particular group of learners in question. Time spent on assessment should be time spent to support and strengthen the teaching/learning process. Many of the methods suggested above, in particular those relating to observation, are designed to become a natural part of normal classroom activities.

The information gained through the assessment procedures suggested above can be used by teachers to determine the effectiveness of the learning experiences that they provide for their learners, as well as the effectiveness of their teaching methods and the resources they use. They are then in a position to make amendments where necessary (see Book 4 for a discussion of curriculum renewal).

Table 9: Assessment form

Name: ..... **Class/Stage:** ..... **Date:** .....
Nature of the assessment activity: **Activity-type(s)** (e.g. essay, research, assignment, test, etc.) **Conditions of assessment:** (e.g. closed book/open book test, with/without a time limit, with/without dictionaries, etc.) **Criteria to be used:**
Description of performance (and/or grade): (Were the criteria met?) **General comment:**
Learner's comment:

Developing Assessment Activities and Exercises

An assessment scheme should include the assessment of activities in which the various components (forms, skills, strategies, and general knowledge) are integrated, as well as exercises to test the discrete components. It is essential to emphasise that the major factor to consider in developing assessment activities and exercises is the *purpose* of the assessment.

Assessment exercises

In developing tests of discrete points of language use, (e.g. tests of vocabulary, grammar, phonology, aspects of skills, strategies, items of general knowledge, etc.), the type of test set will depend on the kind of information that the teacher wishes to find out. Because such information is invariably atomistic in nature, it is likely to be required mainly for diagnostic purposes. Nevertheless, it is important that teachers provide a variety of such tests, so that the range of variables in learners' performance can be monitored.

Assessment activities

The following principles should be borne in mind by teachers in developing assessment activities which are appropriate to their learners.

- The activities will be as *authentic* as possible, reflecting real/realistic use of language in different situations, and for a number of purposes. Authenticity may relate to the selection of text-type, the kind of response which is required, and the conditions under which the activity is to be carried out.
- A *variety of activities* will be used so that performance in different kinds of activities, involving different components (forms, skills, strategies, and general knowledge) can be assessed, and a valid judgement made.
- The activities will be devised on the basis of learners' needs and interests, and will enable all learners to reveal what they have achieved.
- The context of the activity, and the roles and the relationship(s) of the participants will be clear to learners.
- It will not be necessary for learners to use only specific, pre-determined items of language to carry out a particular activity.
- Learners should use the target language as much as possible to cope with any difficulties.
- Since communication involves dealing with the unpredictable, an information gap or some element of unpredictability will be part of all assessment activities.
- The activities will be designed to elicit learners' best performance. The effect of any distracting factor(s) resulting from the way in which the activity is structured, should be reduced.

General criteria underlying the grading of assessment activities

As indicated in Book 1, the school language learning continuum from the first year of schooling to year 12, has been divided into a series of Stages. As learners progress through the Stages, they gradually gain a growing control over the target language and are able increasingly to deal with the unpredictable. In the early Stages, learners will require greater guidance and support in order to gain control over a fairly restricted range of language. The language will on the whole be predictable, and activities will fall within learners' experience. The language will not be particularly culture-specific, and will require little psycholinguistic and/or cognitive processing. In later Stages, learners will be able to deal more and more effectively with the unpredictability of language. Activities will become more open-ended, and will not necessarily fall within

learners' experience. The language used will be more culture-specific, and will require more psycholinguistic and/or cognitive processing.

An activity which involves learners talking about their subject likes and dislikes for example, is quite predictable in the context of the classroom. Even in the later Stages, such a topic is easier for learners than talking about environmental issues or the fear of nuclear war, for example. These are far more abstract topics, and distant from most learners' immediate experience.

The features which are described here are based on the criteria underlying the grading of activities, outlined in Book 2, *Guidelines for grading syllabus content through activities.* The same criteria are applicable to the grading of activities for assessment purposes. It is on the basis of these grading criteria that assessment activities appropriate to the different Stages can be generated.

General criteria for developing assessment activities

An indication of how the general criteria underlying the grading of assessment activities can be developed further into more detailed criteria for developing assessment activities at different Stages, is provided in Tables 10–15. Each table indicates a continuum from Stage 1 to Stage 5.

Criteria are not included for Stages A, B, C, and D, since at the junior and middle primary Stages, it is expected that the approach to assessment will be entirely formative, based on the teacher's observation of learners' progress in relation to the goals and objectives of the program. Records of such observations need to be maintained, not only for the benefit of learners and their parents, but also for the benefit of the local secondary school where, ideally, primary/secondary continuity for learning the target language can be provided.

Table 10: Criteria for developing assessment activities for activity-type 1

Communication Goal/Activity-type 1		Stage 1 → Stage 5 The assessment activity should be such that:	The assessment activity should be such that:
Establish and maintain relationships, and discuss topics of interest e.g. through the exchange of information, ideas, opinions, attitudes, feelings, experiences, and plans **(interacting and discussing)**	The nature of the assessment activity	• the learner is required to exchange information, ideas, opinions, attitudes, feelings, experiences, plans with others in oral interaction or correspondence • the learner is able to predict to a large extent its nature and content	• the learner is required to exchange information, ideas, opinions, attitudes, feelings, experiences, plans, with others in oral interaction or correspondence • it is clear but not totally predictable, with an increasing number of difficulties being introduced e.g. giving reasons, weighing up pros and cons, justifying particular view, etc.
	Linguistic demand	• the language required for its successful completion may be comprised of short, simple utterances • the situations and topics with which it deals are within the learner's experience	• the language required for its successful completion may include longer and more complex utterances • the situations and topics with which it deals may be outside the realm of the learner's everyday experience
	Level of support	• in conversation activities, the learner is offered support from the interlocutor e.g. by adapting the level of talk and its speed to the learner's level, by providing repetition, rephrasing, or paralinguistic support • in correspondence activities the learner is offered support through the description of the activity and/or through the text	• in conversation activities, the learner may be offered support from the interlocutor as required, but at the same time is stretched to the limit of his/her communicative capacity. It is likely that a reduced level of support will be necessary • in correspondence activities the learner may be offered support through the description of the activity and/or through the text

Table 11: Criteria for developing assessment activities for activity-type 2

Communication Goal/Activity-type 2		Stage 1 ——————————▶ Stage 5 The assessment activity should be such that:	The assessment activity should be such that:
Participate in social interaction related to solving a problem, making arrangements, making decisions with others, and transacting to obtain goods, services, and public information **(interacting and deciding)**	The nature of the assessment activity	• the learner is able to predict to a large extent the kinds of problems to be solved, arrangements, decisions and/or transactions to be made, and the context, roles, and relationships within which they occur	• it is clear but not totally predictable in terms of the kinds of problems to be solved, arrangements, decisions and/or transactions to be made. The learner should be able to deal with an increasing number of variables, e.g. goods may be unavailable, or the learner may have to provide an explanation or description and make choices
	Linguistic demand	• the language required for its successful completion may be composed of short simple utterances • the situations and topics with which it deals are within the learner's experience	• the language required for its successful completion may include longer and more complex utterances • the situations and topics with which it deals may be outside the realm of the learner's everyday experience
	Level of support	• in conversation activities, the learner is offered some support from the interlocutor, e.g. by adapting the level of talk and its speed to the learner's level, by providing repetition, rephrasing, or para linguistic support, including props • in correspondence activities the learner is offered support through the description of the activity and/or through the text	• in conversation activities, the learner may be offered support from the interlocutor as required, but at the same time is stretched to the limit of his/her communicative capacity. It is likely that a reduced level of support will be necessary • in correspondence activities the learner may be offered some support through the description of the activity, and/or through the text

Table 12: Criteria for developing assessment activities for activity-types 3a and 3b

Communication Goals/Activity-types 3a and 3b		Stage 1 → Stage 5 The assessment activity should be such that:	The assessment activity should be such that:
3a Obtain information by searching for specific details in a spoken or written text, and then process and use the information obtained **(searching and doing)** **3b** Obtain information by listening to or reading a spoken or written text as a whole, and then process and use the information obtained **(receiving and doing)**	The nature of the assessment activity	• in relation to activity-type 3a, the learner is required to search for specific items of information from spoken or written texts • in relation to activity-type 3b, the learner is required to listen or read for general information • the information is readily accessible, able to be processed and used by the learner. This may involve movement between the target language and English	• in relation to activity-type 3a, the learner is required to search for specific items of information from spoken or written texts • in relation to activity-type 3b, the learner is required to listen or read for general information • the learner may need to search more deeply and manage some unknown features of language and concepts in order to obtain the relevant information. Processing and using the information will involve more complex operations
	Linguistic demand	• the language of the text (spoken or written) and of the response (spoken or written) may be composed of short, simple sentences • the situations and topics with which it deals are within the learner's experience	• the language of the text (spoken or written) and of the response (spoken or written) may include more complex sentences • the situations and topics with which it deals may be outside the realm of the learner's everyday experience
	Level of support	• the context of the text (spoken or written) on which it is based, should assist the learner in obtaining and using relevant information • the text on which it is based provides clues to support the learner e.g. pictures, headlines, key words, layout, etc. in obtaining the relevant information • support is available from dictionaries and/or clues in questions	• the text (spoken or written) may provide fewer contextual clues

Table 13: Criteria for developing assessment activities for activity-type 4

Communication Goal/Activity-type 4		Stage 1 → Stage 5 The assessment activity should be such that:	The assessment activity should be such that:
Give information in spoken or written form e.g. give a talk, write an essay, or a set of instructions **(giving information)**	The nature of the assessment activity	• the learner is required to give information in the target language (spoken or written) • the learner is able to prepare/rehearse the giving of information • the purpose and intended audience are clear to the learner	• the learner is required to give information in the target language (spoken or written). This may include giving explanations as well as descriptions or statements of facts • the learner is able to prepare/rehearse the giving of information • the purpose and intended audience are clear to the learner
	Linguistic demand	• the language required for its successful completion may be composed of short, simple utterances • the situations and topics with which it deals are within the learner's experience	• the language required for its successful completion may include longer and more complex utterances • the situation and topics with which it deals may be outside the realm of the learner's everyday experience
	Level of support	• in giving spoken information, the learner is able to use extensive support e.g. objects to be described, photos, slides, cue cards, etc. • in giving written information, the learner is able to use dictionaries and relevant reference texts for support	• in giving spoken information, the learner may use support e.g. artefacts or visuals, etc. to aid the communication of information • in giving written information, the learner may use dictionaries and relevant reference texts for support if required

Table 14: Criteria for developing assessment activities for activity-type 5

Communication Goal/Activity-type 5		Stage 1 → Stage 5 The assessment activity should be such that:	The assessment activity should be such that:
Listen to, read or view, and respond personally to a stimulus e.g. a story, play, film, song, poem, picture **(personal response)**	The nature of the assessment activity	• the stimulus e.g. story, film, play, song, poem, etc. is accessible to the learner • the learner is able to give a personal response in the target language	• the stimulus e.g. story, film, play, song, poem, etc. is accessible to the learner, though it may contain some unknown elements in terms of language and/or content • the learner is able to give a personal response in the target language
	Linguistic demand	• the language required for its successful completion may be composed of short simple utterances • the stimulus material will present situations and topics which are directly within the realm of the learner's experience	• the language required for its successful completion may include longer and more complex utterances • the stimulus material may present situations and topics which are not directly within the realm of the learner's experience
	Level of support	• the learner is able to use extensive support in order to understand the stimulus e.g. dictionaries, pictures, music, etc. • the learner is able to rely on key words or phrases from the stimulus or the description of the activity, in giving a response	• the learner may rely on some support in order to understand the stimulus and provide a response

Table 15: Criteria for developing assessment activities for activity-type 6

Communication Goal/Activity-type 6		Stage 1 → Stage 5 The assessment activity should be such that:	The assessment activity should be such that:
Be involved in personal expression e.g. create a story, dramatic episode, poem, play **(personal expression)**	The nature of the assessment activity	• In the early Stages, these activities, though useful classroom learning activities, are considered to be inappropriate for assessment purposes	• the learner is able to express himself/herself in an imaginative, personal way in spoken or written form in the target language • the audience is clear to the learner
	Linguistic demand		• the language required for its successful completion may include longer and more complex utterances • it may present situations and topics which are not within the realm of the learner's experience
	Level of support		• the learner may rely on some support, such as suggested models, formats, exemplary material, as well as dictionaries and reference texts

Judging Performance in Activities

Assessment activities developed according to the criteria outlined in the previous section are designed to provide information about learners' performance. Using this information, teachers are able to make judgements about learners' achievement and language proficiency.

General indicators of performance

Using language involves using a number of integrated elements, and it is difficult to consider them in isolation. Considered together, however, the various elements can provide an indication of the quality of performance in a particular assessment activity. Table 16 *Performance indicators* organises the elements according to the ALL Project's five goals of language learning. Teachers may use the table to focus on specific elements of learners' performance when describing how well learners are able to use the target language (see also *Judging the level of performance in activity-types*, which follows). In the table, the language and cultural awareness goals are subsumed within the communication and sociocultural goals. The table is appropriate for all Stages.

General criteria for judging performance in activity-types

General criteria are suggested to help teachers maintain consistency when judging learners' performance. When developing and using such criteria, it is necessary to bear in mind a number of considerations. Firstly, it appears to be currently accepted that the concept of proficiency is multi-dimensional. One conceptualisation of proficiency is that described by Canale and Swain (1980). Their model suggests that there are four separate dimensions or 'competences' underlying proficiency. The term 'competence' refers to knowledge of language items, as well as the ability to use that knowledge to carry out an activity. The four competences referred to are grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence.

Grammatical competence refers to the ability to use rules and language forms. It includes knowledge of vocabulary, and the rules of word formation, pronunciation, spelling, and sentence formation. *Sociolinguistic competence* refers to the extent to which utterances are produced and understood in different sociolinguistic contexts. It concerns the appropriateness of utterances to the context in which the language is used, as well as to the roles and the relationship of the language users, and to the cultural conventions of the relevant target language speech community. *Discourse competence* refers to the ability to combine utterances through cohesion in form and coherence in meaning. The term 'cohesion' refers to devices which link the structures of different utterances in a text (e.g. the use of devices such as pronouns, conjunctions, parallel structures, etc., so that a group of utterances can be understood logically or chronologically). 'Coherence' refers to the relationships which link the meanings of different utterances in a text. *Strategic competence* refers to the ability to use strategies which will enhance the effectiveness of communication or compensate for breakdowns in communication. It involves such features as the ability to guess from context, to ask for support from an interlocutor, to use dictionaries, to paraphrase, to use cognates, etc.

Such attempts to break down proficiency into component parts are useful in providing teachers with a conceptualisation of the various 'domains' which underlie performance and through which performance might be assessed. It must be acknowledged, however, that such theoretical constructs remain to be tested and validated. Little is known, for example, about the relationship of the different components to overall proficiency and to one another (e.g. how grammatical competence relates to sociolinguistic competence), nor about the relative contribution of each component at

Table 16: Performance indicators

Content			
• Completion of activity	activity not completed		activity totally completed
Quality of performance			
Communication goals			
• comprehension of information (from interlocutor or text)	minimal comprehension		total comprehension
• intelligibility of response	minimally intelligible		totally intelligible
• quality of language resource:			
degree of accuracy (including grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation)	minimal accuracy		high accuracy
degree of fluency (speed and rate of utterance, ability to structure discourse)	minimal fluency		high fluency
range of expression (ability to go beyond stereotyped forms and to generate language)	limited range		good range
Sociocultural goals			
• sociocultural appropriateness	inappropriate		appropriate
• sociocultural knowledge	minimal knowledge		good knowledge
Learning-how-to-learn goals (including skills and strategies)			
• use of communication strategies	minimal use		effective use
• level of support required	strong reliance on support		no support required
General knowledge goals			
• knowledge of subject matter of the activity	minimal knowledge		good knowledge

different Stages of language learning. Furthermore, individual learners may vary in the way in which they progress in the various competences. Some may make rapid progress in grammatical and discourse competence, but remain weak in sociolinguistic competence or vice versa. Others may progress through each competence at roughly the same rate. There is great deal of variety in the ways in which learners perform and progress.

Secondly, performance in a particular activity will involve a different range of competences and enabling skills. It is less important to have a complex language resource to carry out a transaction, for example, than it is to participate in a group discussion on an abstract topic. It is for this reason that the general criteria on which judgements of performance are to be made, need to be activity-based and vary from activity-type to activity-type.

Thirdly, learners will vary in their performance ability in different sorts of activities. An individual learner may be good at activities which involve interpersonal relations, for example, but poor at activities which involve obtaining, processing, and using information. Learners operate from variable language resource levels, and variable levels of enabling skills, depending on the activity in which they are involved and their experience of the activity-type and its particular thematic content. It is therefore necessary to take into account variability within individual learners as they perform different types of activities.

Given these three considerations, defining adequate criteria for assessing communicative performance remains a difficult area of assessment. The following *General criteria for judging performance* are provided for each of the six activity-types. They are derived on the one hand from a consideration of the particular abilities and skills required to carry out activities within each activity-type, and on the other hand from a consideration of the performance indicators outlined in the previous section *General indicators of performance.*

Table 17: General criteria for judging performance in activity-type 1

Activity-type 1	General criteria
Establish and maintain relationships, and discuss topics of interest e.g. through the exchange of information, opinions, attitudes, feelings, experiences, and plans **(interacting and discussion)**	**Conversation activities** • Did the learner complete the activity set? • Did the learner understand the information provided by others? • Were the learner's utterances intelligible? • Were the learner's utterances sufficiently accurate so as not to interfere with conveying meaning? • Were the learner's utterances appropriate to the sociocultural context? • Did the learner's input cohere with the flow of the discussion? • Was the learner able to interact with others, take turns, maintain the conversation, generate questions, build on ideas? • Did the learner show an ability to cope with changes of topic and speaker? • Did the learner need help from others? • Did the learner provide information for the discussion? **Correspondence activities** • Did the learner complete the activity set? • Did the learner understand the information provided in the stimulus? • Was the learner's response intelligible? • Was the learner's response sufficiently accurate so as not to interfere with conveying meaning? • Was the learner's response appropriate to the sociocultural context? • Was the learner's response coherent? • Did the learner need support from the stimulus model or dictionary (if provided)?

Table 18: General criteria for judging performance in activity-type 2

Activity-type 2	General criteria
Participate in social interaction related to solving a problem, making arrangements, making decisions with others, transacting to obtain goods, services, and public information **(interacting and deciding)**	**Conversation activities** • Did the learner succeed in solving the problem/making arrangements/ arriving at a decision/obtaining the particular goods or services? • Did the learner understand the information provided by others? • Were the learner's utterances intelligible? • Were the learner's utterances sufficiently accurate so as not to interfere with conveying meaning? • Were the learner's utterances appropriate to the sociocultural context? • Did the learner's responses cohere with the flow of the discussion? • Was the learner able to interact with others, take turns, maintain the conversation, generate questions, build on ideas? • Did the learner need help from others? • Did the learner provide information for the discussion? **Correspondence activities** • Did the learner complete the activity set? • Did the learner understand the information provided in the stimulus? • Was the learner's response intelligible? • Was the learner's response sufficiently accurate so as not to interfere with conveying meaning? • Was the learner's response appropriate to the sociocultural context? • Was the learner's response coherent? • Did the learner need support from the stimulus model or dictionary (if provided)?

Table 19: General criteria for judging performance in activity-type 3(a) & 3(b)

Activity-types 3a & 3b	General criteria
3a Obtain information by searching for specific details in a spoken or written text, and then process and use the information obtained **(searching and doing)** **3b** Obtain information by listening to or reading a spoken or written text as a whole, and then process and use the information obtained **(receiving and doing)**	• Did the learner understand and extract the relevant information relating to the activity set? • Did the learner reproduce the information, as required by the activity? • Did the learner make an appropriate decision/choice/response on the basis of the information obtained • Was the learner's response intelligible? • Was the learner's response sufficiently accurate so as not to interfere with meaning? • Was the learner's response appropriate to the sociocultural context? • Was the learner's response coherent? • To what extent did the learner need support from others (interlocutor, or spoken or written text)?

Note: all macroskills are implied in these activity-types. Responses may be oral or written.

Table 20: General criteria for judging performance in activity-type 4

Activity-type 4	General criteria
Give information in spoken or written form e.g. give a talk, write an essay, or a set of instructions **(giving information)**	• Did the learner provide relevant information as required by the activity? • Did the learner provide an element of interest in the presentation of the information? • Was the learner's response sufficiently accurate so as not to interfere with conveying meaning? • Was the learner's response appropriate to the target audience? • Was the learner's response coherent? • Did the learner need support from others? • Did the learner display an understanding of the structuring of information?

Table 21: General criteria for judging performance in activity-type 5

Activity-type 5	General criteria
Listen to, read or view, and respond personally to a stimulus e.g. a story, play, film, song, poem, picture **(personal response)**	• Did the learner provide an adequate personal response? • Did the learner understand the sequence of the narrative, grasp the thread of the content, the point of the story, argument or theme, the main characters and their motives in relation to the stimulus provided? • Was the learner's response sufficiently accurate so as not to interfere with conveying meaning? • Was the learner's response appropriate to the sociocultural context? • Was the learner's response coherent? • Did the learner need support from others?

Note: the stimulus as well as as the response in this activity-type may be oral or written.

Table 22: General criteria for judging performance in activity-type 6

Activity-type 6	General criteria
Be involved in personal expression e.g. create a story, dramatic episode, poem, play **(personal expression)**	• Did the learner express himself/herself in an imaginative, personal way? • Was the learner's expression sufficiently accurate so as not to interfere with conveying meaning? • Was the learner's expression appropriate to the target audience? • Was the learner's expression coherent? • Did the learner need support from others? • Did the learner display an understanding of the structuring of information on the basis of the genre required by the activity?

The general criteria outlined in Tables 17–22 are necessarily broad since they relate to activity-types, rather than to language-specific assessment activities. When teachers or syllabus writers establish criteria for a specific assessment activity, it is likely that they will need to refine these general criteria, as well as add other specific criteria. An example of how to do this is provided on the following page.

Assessment activity The learner is required to give a five minute talk to the class about his/her family, including their personal traits and interests (*Activity-type 4*).

General criteria for activity-type 4	Specific criteria for this activity based on the general criteria
• Did the learner provide relevant information?	• Did the learner describe members of the family and their personalities, and give an indication of their interests?
• Did the learner provide an element of interest in the presentation of information?	• Did the learner provide anecdotal information or use slides/photos/diagrams to add an element of interest?
• Was the learner's response sufficiently accurate so as not to interfere with conveying meaning?	• Was the learner's talk comprehensible? Was it sufficiently accurate in terms of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar?
• Was the learner's response appropriate to the target audience?	• Did the learner relate well to the audience in both the choice of content and the delivery of information?
• Did the learner need support from others?	• Did the learner need support from the teacher or audience, e.g. did the learner need to be prompted? Did the learner need help with specific phrases or correction of grammar in order to convey meaning?
• Was the learner's response coherent? Did the learner display an understanding of the structuring of information?	• Did the learner structure the information so that there was a logical flow, an introduction, a conclusion, and appropriate linking devices?

Where an individual activity spans more than one activity-type, the teacher may choose to focus on the criteria relating to the activity-type which is most appropriate, or select relevant criteria from the general criteria provided under the activity-types.

Because of the complexity of language and language development, there is no means available at present to create an assessment scheme where the criteria for judging performance are so precisely described that they preclude judgements based on teachers' professional experience. Just as teachers are required to interpret syllabuses, so they are also required to interpret general assessment criteria. Expertise in this area can only be built up through classroom experience and inservice work involving group moderation procedures. Inservice activities at school, or at a regional or system level, need to be organised to provide teachers with opportunities to discuss assessment procedures and to develop a consensus regarding the way in which they judge learners' performance.

Judging the level of performance in activity-types

Teachers need not only to be able to describe the kinds of activities which learners are able to perform, but also the varying degrees of 'successful' performance, and sometimes also 'failure'.

It is convenient to consider three levels of success, corresponding roughly to 'very good' (grade A), 'good' (grade B), and 'satisfactory' (grade C) for successful performance in each assessment activity, as well as an 'unsatisfactory' level (grade D). Criteria for judging each of these levels need to be elaborated in order to provide learners, teachers, parents, employers, and the wider community with an indication of how well learners need to perform in order to achieve a particular level of performance, or grade. The general criteria outlined in the previous section, therefore, must be developed into more specific criteria which describe the levels of performance in each activity-type.

Criteria appropriate for activity-type 1 at Stage 4 are elaborated below. They elaborate four possible levels of performance (i.e. grades A,B,C, and D). It is important to note that the elaboration of these performance criteria merely makes explicit a procedure which experienced teachers carry out intuitively. Similar criteria can be developed for all 6 activity-types and all Stages.

Specific criteria for the determination of levels of performance for activity-type 1 (Stage 4)

Activity-type 1 Establish and maintain relationships and discuss topics of interest, e.g. through the exchange of information, ideas, opinions, attitudes, feelings, experiences, and plans **(interacting and discussing)**

Level of performance: Grade A

Specific criteria

Conversation activities

- There is no doubt the learner successfully completes the activity.
- The learner understands all the information provided by others.
- The learner's utterances are intelligible and sometimes original.
- The learner's utterances are generally accurate.
- The learner's utterances are appropriate to the sociocultural context.
- The learner's input coheres with the flow of the discussion.
- The learner is able to interact with others, take turns, maintain the conversation, generate questions, build on ideas.
- The learner is able to cope with changes of topic and speakers, and deal with redundancies.
- The learner requires no support from others, and uses communication strategies successfully.
- The learner provides information for the discussion.

Correspondence activities

- There is no doubt that the learner successfully completes the activity.
- The learner understands all the information provided in the stimulus.
- The learner's response is intelligible and sometimes original.
- The learner's response is generally accurate.
- The learner's response is appropriate to the sociocultural context.
- The learner's response displays coherence.
- The learner requires no support from others and uses communication strategies successfully.

Level of performance: Grade B

Specific criteria

Conversation activities

- The learner successfully completes the activity.
- The learner understands most of the information provided by others.
- The learner's utterances are nearly always intelligible, and always so when a little support is provided.
- The learner's utterances are generally accurate.
- The learner's utterances are generally appropriate to the sociocultural context.
- The learner's input displays some features of discourse coherence.
- The learner is generally able to interact with others, take turns, and maintain the conversation when a little support is provided.
- The learner is generally able to cope with changes in topic and speaker.
- The learner requires little support from others, and is able to use communication strategies.
- The learner provides information for the discussion.

Correspondence activities

- The learner successfully completes the activity.
- The learner understands most of the information provided in the stimulus.
- The learner's response is nearly always intelligible.
- The learner's response is generally accurate.
- The learner's response is generally appropriate to the sociocultural context.
- The learner is able to display some features of discourse coherence.
- The learner requires little support from others, and is able to use communication strategies.

Level of performance: Grade C

Specific criteria

Conversation activities

- There may be some doubt as to whether some parts of the activity are successfully completed, but given some support, the learner is able to complete the activity.
- The learner understands most of information, when support is provided.
- The learner's utterances are eventually intelligible.
- The learner's utterances contain inaccuracies.
- The learner's utterances may not always be appropriate to the sociocultural context.
- The learner's utterances display few features of discourse coherence.
- The learner is able to interact with others, take turns, participate in the conversation when support is provided.
- The learner may not only always be able to cope with changes in topic and speaker.
- The learner requires frequent support but is able to use some communication strategies.
- The learner provides some information for the discussion.

Correspondence activities

- There may be some doubt as to whether some parts of the activity are successfully completed.
- The learner understands most of the information provided in the stimulus when support is provided.
- The learner's response is eventually intelligible.
- The learner's response contains inaccuracies.
- The learner's response may not always be appropriate to the sociocultural context.
- The learner's response displays few features of discourse coherence.
- The learner requires frequent support.

Level of performance: Grade D

Specific criteria

Conversation activities

- The learner is unable to complete the activity even when support is provided.
- The learner may understand a limited number of items of information, but only when much support is provided.
- The learner's utterances are generally unintelligible.
- The learner's utterances are generally inaccurate.
- The learner's utterances are frequently not appropriate to the sociocultural context.
- The learner's utterances display little or no discourse coherence.
- The learner has difficulty in interacting with others and participating in the conversation, even when support is provided.
- The learner cannot cope with changes in topic and speaker.
- The learner relies heavily on support.
- The learner is unable to provide information for the discussion.

Correspondence activities

- The learner is unable to complete the activity even when support is provided.
- The learner may understand a limited number of items of information, but only when much support is provided.
- The learner's response is generally unintelligible.
- The learner's response is generally inaccurate.
- The learner's response is frequently not appropriate to the sociocultural context.
- The learner's response displays little or no discourse coherence.
- The learner relies heavily on support.

It is finally necessary to establish how the various criteria contribute to an overall judgement of learners' performance. Teachers tend to make such judgements by weighing the global assessment of performance against a closer consideration of the specific elements which contribute to the overall performance, then reconsidering the performance of the activity as a whole.

The first of the general criteria relates always to *completion of the activity*. The activity is judged as a whole, and the major criterion at this stage is to determine whether or not the learner has succeeded in communicating.

The next step is to examine the *quality of the language performance*. It is at this point that the remainder of the general criteria for judging performance in activity-types becomes significant. They are designed to assist teachers to differentiate degrees of success by looking specifically at the elements which contribute to performance. The relative weighting of each of the criteria remains a matter for teacher judgement, keeping in mind the purpose of the activity and the particular focus appropriate in the unit of work. Having made a judgement about the specific elements of the performance, it is then necessary to make a final global judgement in order to reach a conclusion.

The criteria presented in the preceding sections should be viewed as hypotheses which need to be examined in the light of classroom realities and the professional experience of the teachers who use them. On the basis of such experience and further theoretical insights emerging from research, they can be amended and revised as required.

The relationship between performance criteria and the Stages of language learning

It is useful for teachers to have some indication of the likely characteristics of performance which might be expected at each Stage. By using such information, they are able to avoid judging learners' performance against the norm of the fluent background-speaker, and instead, judge learners with regard to their developing competence. Indications of the likely characteristics of performance at each Stage can assist teachers in developing realistic expectations about learners' performance at different Stages, both in terms of setting goals, objectives, and activities at the outset, and in judging performance later.

The following descriptions of the likely characteristics of performance at Stages 1–5 constitute an attempt to provide teachers with such assistance. They have been developed on the basis of information drawn from the ASLPR scale (Ingram and Wylie 1982). The ASLPR scale is a general proficiency scale which describes a series of levels of language behaviour on a continuum ranging from 'zero to native-like' in each of the four macro-skills, and is based on such factors as the kinds of tasks which learners can carry out, the range of situations and functions, features of pronunciation, vocabulary, syntax, discourse, and register flexibility and sensitivity. Further information has been drawn from the Royal Society of the Arts Examination Board's Guidelines (1984), the ACTFL scale (1983), and the experiences of classroom teachers who have been involved in working at the different Stages.

A description has not been provided for Stages A, B, C, and D, because it is considered that at these Stages, the most appropriate form of assessment is informal teacher observation. A detailed description of what learners at these Stages are able to do in the target language (in terms of activities which realise goals and objectives) represents an appropriate means of describing achievement to the learners themselves, their parents, the community, and most importantly the teacher who will be working with the learners in the next Stage.

The characteristics of performance are described in relation to the following goals of language learning: communication, sociocultural, learning-how-to-learn, and general knowledge. They should be used in conjunction with the descriptions of the charateristics of learner groups at different Stages (see Book 2, *Framework of Stages*, and the *Statements of Suggested Syllabus Content* for each Stage in *Appendix 2*).

Descriptions of likely characteristics of performance at Stages 1–5

Stage 1

Communication

- able to use only predictable or familiar language within known or specified topics and contexts
- able to use learned patterns or formulae within a limited range of expression
- not always intelligible, requiring strong support from the interlocutor (e.g. repetition, paraphrase, mime, gesture)
- not accurate
- strong influence of dominant language on pronunciation and syntax is likely
- short utterances, very limited coordination of utterances
- able to understand longer texts only if there is repetition of information, or clear indication as to structuring of the language
- requires time to decode, relying heavily on clues (e.g. contextual support, pictures, body language, etc.) for understanding. Pauses are likely in production.

Sociocultural

- able to manage few speech conventions that differ from the dominant language, will tend to rely on speech conventions of the dominant language
- able to manage only situations with which he/she is familiar
- able to manage topics concerning the target culture which are comparable with his/her own experiences.

Learning-how-to-learn

- depends on contextual and paralinguistic support (e.g. facial expression, gesture, etc.)
- needs to be able to ask for repetition and rephrasing
- needs dictionary, visual clues to aid understanding
- relies on mime, gesture, facial expressions, to convey meaning
- able to use dictionaries and reference texts with guidance
- able to locate information in various documents when support is provided to assist in interpretation of meaning (e.g. pictures, charts, headings, etc).

General knowledge

- able to manage topics/contexts which are generally experienced at this Stage, provided the language resource has been suitably introduced.

Stage 2

Communication

- beginning to be able to use a wider range of language; language is less predictable than in Stage 1
- able to draw upon a wider range of patterns and phrases than in Stage 1
- limited ability to guess meaning from context
- generally intelligible, but will need support from interlocutor or text
- not always accurate
- dominant language influences are still evident
- utterances remain short with few, if any, cohesion devices
- able to manage longer texts provided essential information is highlighted
- beginning to manage switches of topic and speaker
- able to follow main thread of a text, provided there is not too much subordination
- decoding remains slow.

Sociocultural

- not always able to manage speech conventions in the target language that differ from the dominant language; will rely on speech conventions of the dominant language
- able to interact effectively in familiar situations
- beginning to adapt language use to the relationship with the interlocutor and to the context.

Learning-how-to-learn

- dependent on contextual and paralinguistic support (e.g. facial expressions, gesture, etc).
- needs to ask for repetition and rephrasing
- needs dictionary/visual clues to aid understanding
- relies less on mime/gesture to convey meaning
- beginning to perceive structure of texts and distinguish between major points and detail
- able to use dictionaries and reference texts
- able to locate information in various documents when support is provided to assist interpretation of meaning (e.g. pictures, charts, headings, etc.).

General knowledge

- able to manage topics/contexts which are generally experienced at this Stage, provided the language resource has been suitably introduced.

Stage 3

Communication

- able to manage a wider range of language than Stage 2, within a wider range of topics and text-types
- beginning to guess meaning from context
- generally intelligible
- errors are likely to occur, but beginning to create language more or less accurately
- reduced dominant language influences for second language learners
- utterances will be longer, and there is evidence of some discourse development and growing use of cohesion devices
- able to manage switches in topic and speaker
- able to perceive the structure of texts and distinguish between major points and detail
- gaining fluency in a growing number of contexts.

Sociocultural

- growing understanding of the speech conventions of the target culture
- able to cope with greater stylistic variation
- growing perception of sociocultural allusions
- able to adapt language use to the relationship with interlocutors
- an early ability to use language appropriate to context and intention.

Learning-how-to-learn

- relies less on support from interlocutor or text
- still needs to ask for repetition and rephrasing at times
- able to guess meaning from context, or use other strategies such as examining suffixes, derivations of words, etc.
- needs dictionary, but less reliant than in Stage 2, and likely to select more accurately
- able to take turns in discussion and generate questions
- able to paraphrase.

General knowledge

- able to manage a wider range of topics/contexts, provided the language resource has been introduced.

Stage 4

Communication

- able to use a range of expression and understand a range of texts in non-specialist registers
- generally able to guess meaning from context
- generally intelligible, but where breakdown occurs, is able to use repair strategies
- accuracy increasing, though errors remain
- able to process a range of simple texts
- able to perceive the structure of texts and distinguish between major points and detail
- able to produce well developed longer utterances when required
- reasonably fluent in most contexts.

Sociocultural

- able to understand and use the speech conventions of the target culture
- able to manage some stylistic variations
- beginning to perceive changes in speaker attitudes and relationships
- able to use language appropriate to context and intention.

Learning-how-to-learn

- able to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words
- may still have to ask for help in unfamiliar situations
- relies less on support of interlocutor
- able to use strategies to avoid pauses in conversation, or gaps in knowledge of particular structures or vocabulary
- able to use dictionary efficiently
- able to take turns in discussion and generate questions
- aware of techniques used in letter writing and other genres.

General knowledge

- able to deal with a range to topics/contexts which are not necessarily familiar
- able to manage some abstract texts in non-specialist registers.

Stage 5

Communication

- able to use a range of expression, and understand a range of texts in non-specialist registers, and developing increasing flexibility
- able to manage some specialist registers if these have been experienced
- generally intelligible, but where breakdown occurs, is able to use repair strategies
- able to process a range of texts (including literary texts), and read for pleasure
- beginning to follow more complex patterns of discourse
- generally fluent
- able to write discourse of several paragraphs, including social correspondence, summaries, narratives, descriptions.

Sociocultural

- able to understand and use the speech conventions of the target culture
- able to manage an increasing range of stylistic variations
- able to perceive changes in speaker attitudes and relationships
- able to use language appropriate to context and intention.

Learning-how-to-learn

- able to guess meaning of unfamiliar words
- able to manage without support of the interlocutor
- able to use strategies to avoid pauses in conversation or gaps in knowledge of particular structures or vocabulary
- able to use monolingual and bilingual dictionaries effectively
- aware of and able to use techniques used in writing letters, summaries, narratives, descriptions
- able to take notes, summarise.

General knowledge

- able to deal with a range of topics/contexts, including news items, descriptions of social events, etc.
- able to manage some abstract texts in non-specialist registers.

These descriptions should not be regarded as complete checklists of performance, but rather as contexts for judging performance and applying the suggested performance criteria to a particular Stage. The descriptions may also be used by syllabus writers as a guide to describing appropriate targets for different Stages. Through such use, the descriptions themselves will be refined, and language-specific examples will be developed.

It is hoped that the assessment guidelines suggested above will assist teachers to consider the developmental processes of language learning when assessing performance, so that they are in a strong position to determine which features of language behaviour in a particular language may be expected at a particular Stage, and are able to make appropriate judgements of learners' performance and needs in terms of further learning. At the same time, it is hoped that teachers will work towards refining the suggested criteria in the light of classroom reality and learners' actual performance.

Links with Senior Secondary Assessment Authorities

A proposal for a *National Assessment Framework for Languages at Senior Secondary Level* (Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia (SSABSA) 1987) is currently under consideration by assessment authorities in all states/territories. The *National Assessment Framework* comprises a *General Course*, an *Extended Course*, and a *Specialist Studies Course*, and is designed to cater for a broad spectrum of learners entering year 12 with different levels of language proficiency. The Framework's approach to syllabus design and assessment is organised on the same conceptual model as the *ALL Guidelines*, and it is designed to dovetail with the ALL Project's Framework of Stages. Stage 3 (senior secondary) of the ALL Project's Framework of Stages is equivalent to the *National Assessment Framework's General Course.* Stage 4 is equivalent to the *Extended Course*, and Stage 5 to the *Specialist Studies Course*. It is hoped that, together, the two initiatives will bring commonality to languages syllabus design, assessment procedures, and credentialling from the very first year of schooling until year 12, in all languages, and across all states and territories of Australia.

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